DEMOCRATS, EVANGELICALS, AND GOD
MICHELLE COTTLE, ALAN WOLFE

THE DEMOCRATS' NEW IMAGE GURU
NOAM SCHEIBER

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

9/11 COMMISSION REPORT

WHEN GOVERNMENT WRITES HISTORY

A PERSONAL REPORT BY ERNEST R. MAY

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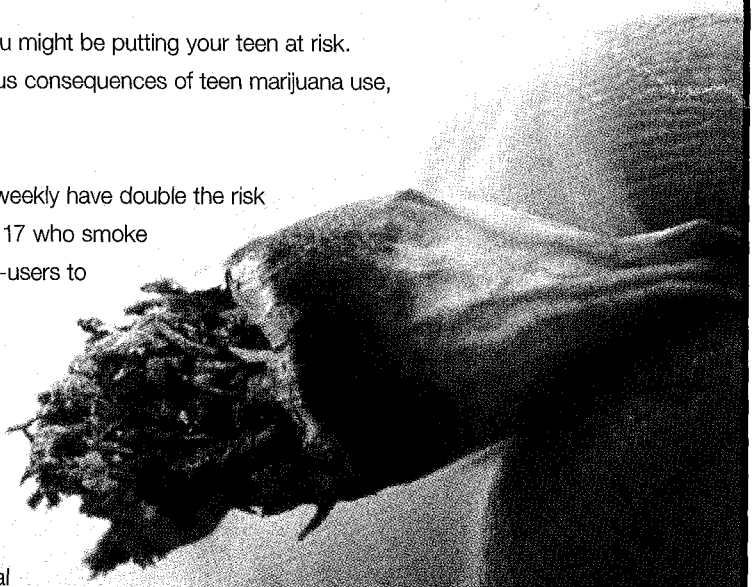
Office of National Drug Control Policy

MARIJUANA AND YOUR TEEN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Depression. Suicidal Thoughts. Schizophrenia.

If you have outdated perceptions about marijuana, you might be putting your teen at risk. New research is giving us better insight into the serious consequences of teen marijuana use, especially how it impacts mental health.



Did you know that young people who use marijuana weekly have double the risk of depression later in life?[1] And that teens aged 12 to 17 who smoke marijuana weekly are three times more likely than non-users to have suicidal thoughts?[2]

And if that's not bad enough, marijuana use in some teens has been linked to increased risk for schizophrenia in later years.[3]

Today's teens are smoking a more potent drug[4] and starting use at increasingly younger ages during crucial brain development years.[5] Still think marijuana's no big deal?

Remember, you are the most important influence in your teen's life when it comes to drugs,[6] so tell your teen the facts about marijuana. Teens who learn about the risks from their parents are less likely to smoke marijuana or use other drugs than teens who don't.

Let your teens know you don't want them using marijuana. Their mental health may depend on it.

Signed,

- *American Psychiatric Association*
- *American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*
- *American Society of Addiction Medicine*
- *Asian Community Mental Health Services*
- *Association for Medical Education and Research in Substance Abuse*
- *Institute for Behavior and Health, Inc.*
- *National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association*
- *National Association of Addiction Treatment Providers*
- *National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare*
- *National Latino Behavioral Health Association*
- *National Medical Association*
- *Office of National Drug Control Policy*
- *Partnership for a Drug-Free America*

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[1]Patton, GC et al. Cannabis use and mental health in young people: cohort study. *British Medical Journal*, 325: 1195–1198, 2002. [2]Greenblatt, J. Adolescent self-reported behaviors and their association with marijuana use, *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration* (SAMHSA), 1998. [3]Arseneault, L et al. Cannabis use in adolescence and risk for adult psychosis: longitudinal prospective study. *British Medical Journal*, 325: 1212–1213, 2002; Veen, N et al. Cannabis use and age at onset of schizophrenia. *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, 161: 501–506, 2004. [4]*Marijuana Potency Monitoring Project. Report No. 83*, University of Mississippi, 2003. [5]SAMHSA. Trends in Initiation of Substance Use, 2003. [6]SAMHSA. Parental Disapproval of Youths' Substance Abuse, 2002.

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CORRESPONDENCE

ACCOUNT ABILITY

PROFESSOR N. GREGORY MANKIW says that extra government borrowing required by personal accounts "is offset by a reduction in the government's liability to pay future Social Security benefits" ("Personal Dispute," March 21). This may be true in a balance-sheet sense, but it is not the end of the story. The government's liability on Treasury bonds differs from its liability on Social Security. If you increase the government's liability on Treasury bonds and reduce its liability to pay future Social Security benefits, you are doing three things. First, the Treasury has never issued a bond with a longer maturity than 40 years, whereas Social Security liabilities reach beyond 40 years. So you are shortening the term of the government's liability. Many a bankrupt businessman can testify to the dangers of such an action. Second, you are issuing an obligation that cannot be modified (short of default) for an obligation that can be modified (by reducing benefits). The Treasury has not defaulted on a bond since the Gold Clause cases in the 1930s. Default nowadays could have disastrous consequences. Third, Social Security obligations right now are "held" by ordinary Americans, who are required to accept them and cannot sell them. Actual Treasury bonds are issued to buyers who have to be persuaded to buy them and who can sell them if they choose. It is not at all clear the bond markets will calmly absorb vast new issues of Treasury debt at reasonable interest rates. These three factors make Mankiw's balance-sheet point almost irrelevant.

JACK HARLLEE
Washington, D.C.

OF THE MYRIAD OBJECTIONS THAT Mankiw chose not to deal with, I would like to call attention to just two. Social Security currently provides annual inflation adjustments. Private accounts likely would not, especially if one were required at retirement to purchase a fixed annuity. Even if inflation averaged only 2.5 percent per year (unlikely, given the huge deficits in our future), someone retiring at 66 would see a 22 percent erosion in their purchasing power ten years later. Second, the current system provides participants with a disability benefit. Participants under Mankiw's plan would be wise to purchase disability insurance on their own, because there's no way private accounts would be able to provide the necessary income for someone to live with dignity if he became disabled.

DAVID GAWENDA
Dane County Treasurer
Madison, Wisconsin

USING THE HARVARD RETIREMENT system as a model for the privatization of part of Social Security is an effective rhetorical device, but it is a red herring. There are several problems with this model. First, it represents an addition to Social Security and not a substitute, as the Bush plan proposes. Second, it is not a social insurance plan, while Social Security is just that—and Social Security does not permit opting out; thus, it is not subject to the standard self-selection problem. Third, Harvard professors are not in the average- or median-income category, so it is in their interest not to have the progressivity of the Social Security system apply to their retirement accounts. ("Let them eat cake," one might as well say.) Fourth, the Harvard retirement system presumably does not have to deal with the disability aspect of Social Security nor the legacy aspect described in Jonathan Chait's article ("Blocking Move," March 21). And, finally, Harvard professors are probably slightly more sophisticated than the average Social Security recipient and are better able to deal with the risk involved in defined contribution plans.

EGON NEUBERGER
Emeritus Professor of Economics
Stony Brook University
Stony Brook, New York

N. GREGORY MANKIW RESPONDS: In the brief space I have been allotted, let me respond to three key points raised in these letters. First, David Gawenda and Egon Neuberger are concerned about disability benefits. This issue is important but not germane. The personal accounts that President Bush has proposed would fund retirement benefits under Social Security. They would not affect benefits for the disabled in any way. Second, Neuberger mentions the progressivity of the Social Security system. It is worth pointing out that the "progressive indexing" proposed by Robert Pozen and recently endorsed by Bush would allow the real benefits for the poor to continue to rise, while asking for the largest sacrifice from more affluent recipients. Third, Jack Harllee suggests that implicit debt and explicit debt are different because defaulting on explicit debt is more difficult and onerous than cutting future Social Security benefits. He is right. Indeed, if no action is taken, benefits will be cut automatically across the board when the trust fund runs out. But doesn't this observation belie the claim of many Democrats that the current pay-as-you-go Social Security system provides a low-risk income for future retirees? ■

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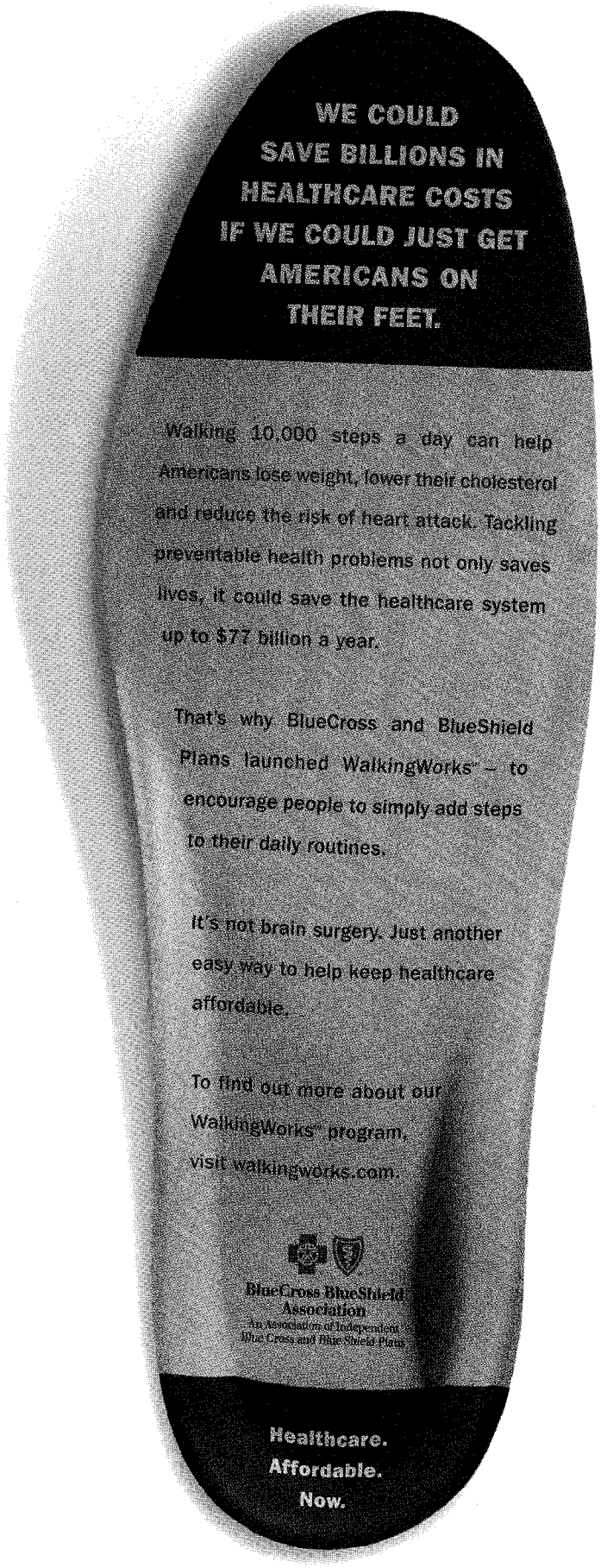
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Losing Hope

TRB FROM BOSTON

NOT SO LONG AGO IN A political galaxy that only seems far away, George W. Bush declared that he was a "compassionate conservative." The term would come to have various meanings, but one of its clear implications was that Bush cared deeply for poor people and would embrace innovative ways of helping them—particularly those initiatives that relied more on the private sector than the government.

If true, then a new public housing development in Boston would seem to be what he had in mind. For more than 60 years, several hundred people lived in Maverick Gardens Housing Project—a neglected, boxy set of buildings typical of the housing projects constructed across the United States after World War II. Owned and operated by the Boston Housing Authority, the old development seemed to breed crime and indolence—trapping the poor in concentrated pockets of poverty rather than helping them up the socioeconomic ladder, thereby evoking the worst stereotypes of big-government liberalism.

Today, bulldozers are turning Maverick Gardens into mounds of brick, rubble, and shredded ironwork. Most of the residents have moved across the street to the new Maverick Landing, which offers apartments in a colorful townhouse-style building, individual backyards, plus some spectacular views of the downtown skyline that lies across the harbor. While Maverick Gardens was limited to the poor, Maverick Landing is a mixed-income development, with 20 percent of the units set aside for renters who will pay market rates to the private developer that built the project. The Boston Housing Authority remains nominally in charge, but it leaves day-to-day management to a partnership between the developer and a tenants' association. In 15 years, the association will have the right to buy the buildings from the developer; in the meantime, residents can apply for federal subsidies that would allow them to buy their individual units.

If this sounds like a conservative's idea of what public housing should look like, that's because it is. New Maverick is a product of the Hope VI federal housing program, an initiative whose intellectual lineage traces back, in part, to Jack Kemp, the former Republican vice presidential candidate who was secretary of housing and urban development under President George H.W. Bush. Kemp believed the way to save public housing was to make residents more responsible for their own communities by giving them incentives to take control and offering them a financial stake in the projects' success. And that's exactly what Hope VI does: Rather than having government do the heavy lifting of razing old projects and building new ones, Washington merely puts up seed money. It's up to the tenants of the old projects, working with local housing authorities, to apply for that money. They can't get it until they've lined up a private developer and put together a convincing plan for managing resident services like security or after-school activities. Hope VI flourished under the Clinton administration—which, despite its liberal reputation, was no fan of old-style public housing. And today, its most ardent defenders include Republicans like Senator Kit Bond, who believes the program has done wonders in his home state of Missouri.

But guess which very important Republican doesn't like the program? Bush. His proposed budgets have tried to eliminate the program for two years running. Although Congress hasn't let him do that yet, he has already pushed down funding to a mere quarter of what it was at the height of the Clinton administration's investment.

This effort to destroy Hope VI is of a piece with another head-scratching Bush administration initiative that targets the Section 8 program. Section 8 gives public housing residents vouchers that they can apply toward rent in the suburbs or anywhere else they can find a willing landlord. This, too, would seem compatible with the Bush worldview. (It's a voucher program, after all.) But, in previous budgets, Bush tried to reduce its funding. This year, he has proposed making it a block grant, a move many critics believe is merely a more subtle attempt to cut it.

The administration explains its position by arguing that Hope VI has not worked, pointing out (correctly) that construction on many projects lags. But, while some cities have indeed done a lousy job of implementing the program, early signs suggest that cities like Boston are making it work. And, while the delays are indeed frustrating, they also reflect an original schedule that was overly optimistic, failing to account for the logistical and political complications inherent in trying to build affordable housing while simultaneously tearing down the existing stock. (Indeed, probably the biggest problem with Hope VI is one that the left typically raises: It destroys more units than it creates, leaving some residents out in the cold.)

Another argument you hear from the right is that, by segregating housing stock from the private market, Hope VI depresses local property values, retarding development in ways that ultimately hurt the poor more than forcing them to find housing on their own. But the very opposite may be happening in East Boston. The Maverick construction seems to have fueled a redevelopment wave all along the waterfront, where new luxury condominiums are displacing long-abandoned warehouses.

In any event, if Bush's real concern were that programs like Hope VI or Section 8 aren't doing enough to help people obtain affordable housing, then he would presumably reinvest the money saved through his cuts in more effective programs. But there's no sign of that. In fact, according to analysis by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Bush's most recent budget proposals called for cutting the overall housing budget by between $1 billion and $4 billion next year (depending on how you count the different pieces, some of which would be shifted between Cabinet departments).

The best explanation for the Bush administration's housing proposals is sheer political expediency. Eager to show he could be tough on domestic spending, Bush decided to pick on politically weak programs that have only the poor as their constituency. (If public housing somehow subsidized the pharmaceutical industry, then, surely, funding would be less scarce.) Once upon a time, Republicans like Jack Kemp showed that compassionate conservatism isn't always a cynical ploy. Today, President Bush shows that, oftentimes, it still is. **JONATHAN COHN**

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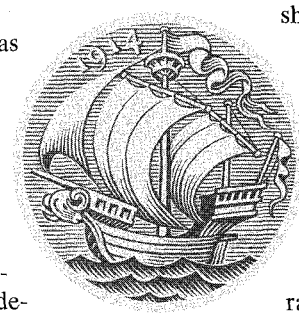
Nuclear Nonsense

THE FILIBUSTER HAS a long and ignoble history. Brought into being almost accidentally by the U.S. Senate in the early 1800s, the parliamentary tactic has, for nearly 200 years, allowed a minority in that legislative body to thwart the will of the majority by requiring 60 senators to agree to put a matter to a vote. Quite often, the filibuster has served Senate minorities as a means to nefarious ends—with, most notoriously, conservatives using it to block anti-lynching bills, voting rights legislation, and anti-segregation measures that liberal majorities favored over the years. Simply put, the filibuster is a decidedly undemocratic—and oftentimes illiberal—institution.

As such, there might be a basis for considering the Senate Republicans' recent calls for the filibuster's abolition—the so-called "nuclear option"—a welcome development. But, unfortunately, the rationale for Senate Republicans' newfound contempt for the filibuster is not, in fact, some high-minded concern for democratic process but rather a very practical desire to confirm President Bush's most controversial judicial nominees—something they are unable to do as long as Democrats can filibuster against their nominations coming to a vote. And, because of this, the Republican case against the filibuster is remarkably weak.

To begin with, Republicans are only interested in abolishing the filibuster for judicial appointments; they are not calling for getting rid of the legislative filibuster. But using the filibuster to block judicial nominees is actually far easier to justify on democratic grounds than using it to block legislation. After all, it would seem to be a tenet of democracy that a majority party be allowed to pass its legislative program and then be held accountable at the polls (see Jonathan Cohn, "Kill Phil," April 25). But there is no such prospect of democratic accountability in the case of judicial appointments. Legislation can later be amended or repealed if voters ultimately disagree with the majority that passed it; judicial appointments are, of course, for a lifetime.

Republicans often speak as if no one had used filibusters to block nominees to the federal courts before Bush came into office. In other words, they argue that Democrats have broken an unwritten rule. But this is simply untrue. In 1968, Republicans and Southern Democrats filibustered Lyndon Johnson's nomination of Abe Fortas to serve as the Supreme Court's chief justice, ultimately forcing Johnson to withdraw the nomination. What's more, Republicans used their own parliamentary devices—different from, but no less undemocratic than, filibusters (namely, bottling up nominations in the Judiciary Committee)—to block more than 60 of Bill Clinton's judicial picks from getting up-or-down votes in the full Senate.



There is no justification, therefore, for abolishing judicial filibusters but preserving legislative ones—other than Republicans' desire for political gain. Much as the GOP argued that congressional maps should be redrawn after a switch in party control of a state legislature—in order to better represent a state's partisan makeup—but then only supported redistricting efforts in states like Texas and Colorado, where the state legislatures happened to go from Democratic to Republican, the GOP is once again attempting an ad hoc rule change from which only it benefits.

That is not to say that there are no equitable ways to change the filibuster rules. One proposal currently floating around Washington calls for a repeal of the filibuster beginning in 2009—after Bush has finished his second term, when no one knows which party will control the White House and the Senate. Another proposal would be to limit judicial terms to a sufficiently long period of time—perhaps 15 years, but not a lifetime—so as to make the loss of the judicial filibuster more palatable. But, while some of these proposals are more worthy than others, they are largely irrelevant, since Republicans have displayed no willingness to compromise.

Which is why Democrats should hold their ground and refuse to end their filibusters against the judicial nominees they oppose—and essentially call the GOP's bluff to detonate the nuclear option. Yes, it is hypocritical for Democrats, who have historically railed against the filibuster as an anti-democratic institution, to now embrace it as a pillar of minority rights. But the filibuster is not the only principle at stake in this fight. Democrats are fighting to prevent Republicans from stocking the federal bench with conservative extremists. If the filibuster is the only way to stop such an ideological makeover, then they must use it. ■

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NOTEBOOK

FOR RUMMY, PLENTY OF TIME . . . FOR ABBAS, NONE TO SPARE

COUNTER MEASURES

OBITUARIES FOR DONALD RUMSfeld's career have been prepared numerous times during his tenure as defense secretary. And yet Rummy has held on. For the last several months, the buzzards have resumed circling over his office, with rumors that he would depart after next year's Quadrennial Defense Review, a milestone on his quest to transform the military. But, when Thom Shanker and Eric Schmitt of *The New York Times* sought out Rumsfeld for a piece on his legacy, the 72-year-old secretary opined that "there will be plenty of time."

That's too bad, because, in the piece, the case against Rumsfeld is elegantly—if inadvertently—made by Larry Di Rita, the Pentagon spokesman and occasional Rumsfeld squash partner. Noting how the hard-charging secretary fastidiously measures a daily five-mile walk through the Pentagon, Di Rita tells the *Times* that his boss is "an inveterate counter with a purpose." From what we've seen of Rumsfeld's counting, that purpose is often to mislead. After all, every figure he has ever given about the size and capability of the Iraqi security forces—whose development is the backbone of Rumsfeld's strategy for post-Saddam Iraq—has been massively inflated, including tens of thousands of soldiers and police who aren't battle-ready or don't even show up for duty. (As defense analyst Anthony Cordesman observed to *The Washington Post* in January, "All of the numbers are probably valid, and almost none of them are relevant.") Of course, at this point, the Iraq war is basically a nettlesome distraction for Rumsfeld: According to the *Times*, teleconferences with American commanders in Iraq "have dwindled to a few phone calls a week." This despite renewed insurgent attacks that, over the last two weeks, killed more than 400 Iraqis, as well as a major Marine offensive in the northwest.

But don't expect Rumsfeld to change course. As he told Shanker and Schmitt, events in the war on terrorism have only "provided added impetus to doing the things that absolutely had to be done in this department"—namely, reshaping the military. If he's right that his vision for the remainder of his tenure is already reflected on the ground in Iraq, we're in a lot of trouble.

Donald Rumsfeld

COLOR COMMENTARY

DID SOMEBODY SLIP TOM RIDGE truth serum? Speaking at a Washington forum this week, the former homeland security secretary revealed that he frequently opposed the Bush administration's decisions to put the United States on high alert for terrorist attacks by elevating the color-coded threat level to orange. "More often than not, we were the least inclined to raise it," Ridge said, according to a report in *USA Today*. "Sometimes we disagreed with the intelligence assessment. Sometimes we thought, even if the intelligence was good, you don't necessarily put the country on [alert]. . . . There were times when some people were really aggressive about raising it, and we said, 'For that?'" Of course, Ridge's comments only prompt the question, *Why* would the Bushies be so aggressive about raising the threat level? Alas, we'll probably never know. After all, if Ridge is anything like other former Bush officials who made the mistake of candor after leaving the administration—most notably former Faith-Based Initiative adviser John DiIulio—then he will soon recant his criticisms (maybe even calling them "groundless and baseless," as DiIulio did), express his deep and sincere remorse for any pain he's caused, and never utter another critical word about his former employer again.

FATAH'S CHANCE

FATAH, THE POLITICAL PARTY OF Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas, seems to have won the third round in the local elections of emerging Palestine. But Hamas, the gunmen of virulent Islam in the territories, did especially well in the big towns and cities. This does not augur well for the career of Palestinian moderation nor for the prospects of peace between Israel and the PA. And it does not augur well for the parliamentary elections slated for July.

Hamas is the preferred—no, anointed—voice of the Palestinians who do not benefit from the endemic, widely diffused, and deeply rooted structural corruption of their society. This is Yasir Arafat's literal legacy to his people, and, although Abbas has moved somewhat away from the rais' warlike way of dealing with the Israelis, his regime remains far from accountable, transparent, or honest. Those foreigners who kept Arafat and his minions in power (Kofi Annan, Jacques Chirac, Javier Solana, even Bill Clinton) are therefore also responsible for the hold that dishonesty, raw and

DAVID COWLES

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cruel, still exercises over Palestinian society. In any case, Israel, which has staked much on Abbas, cannot view his political vulnerabilities calmly. If Hamas comes to power, all of the fundamentals of the road map to peace are jettisoned.

Hamas hasn't pretended for a moment that it is willing to have an independent Palestine live side by side with Israel. This is why Israel has insisted that the PA confiscate illegal weapons and arrest Palestinian terrorists on the loose. The PA, however, has fulfilled none of these obligations. But these obligations resonate in Israel's own history. The Haganah, the army of the pre-state Yishuv (and of immediate post-independence Israel), actually handed—during a painful time called the *saison*—members of a right-wing Zionist militia, known as the Irgun, which was opposed to partition, over to the British who then governed Mandatory Palestine. And David Ben Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, ordered the Haganah to sink the *Altalena*, a ship bringing arms to the Irgun in violation of a cease-fire. The command was carried out by a young officer named Yitzhak Rabin. So far, the Palestinian authorities show no evidence of such harsh wisdom.

The Palestinians have also been demanding that Israel release more and more Palestinians in its custody, but Israel has now interrupted the process, saying that the PA has not fulfilled its undertakings to shut down both the terrorist groups still operating and organizing in the territories and the sending of rockets from Gaza into Israel. Releasing resentful prisoners (experienced in violence against Israelis) would be a self-defeating act, especially since those rogue militias would welcome them with open arms; and, if Hamas wins the early summer parliamentary elections, these militias would no longer be rogue but instead the official soldiers of Palestine. In not curbing Palestinian terrorism, Abbas is playing with fire, and it is a fire that may eventually consume him, too. ■

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REIHAN SALAM

WHERE HAVE YOU GONE, NEW DEMOCRATS?: In March, Ari Berman was crowing in *The Nation* that the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) was going nowhere. Berman recounted the humiliating spectacle of Barack Obama removing his name from a list of DLC rising stars. Ouch. Just a few years ago, paleoliberals were scrambling for New Dem bona fides. Those days are now decisively done. To the left of the Democratic Party, this is seen as very good news indeed. Unfortunately, it's very bad news for poor Americans. While it could also be bad news for the electoral prospects of the Democratic Party—I almost certainly think it is—the whole "bad news for poor Americans" strikes me as more important. Call me crazy.

As most of you know, a lot of the energy on the left these days comes from the local living-wage campaigns conducted by progressive-minded students and their allies in organized labor. In years past, writers like *The American Prospect*'s Harold Meyerson have hailed this activist upsurge as a new and exciting political vision with the potential to transform American life for the better. The beauty of these campaigns, to the campaigners, is that they deliver concrete results. So, while you might not achieve political victories at the national level, you can create more decent and humane working conditions in your own community. Unfortunately, these campaigns against employers—Wal-Mart is the *bête noire*, but there are others—are almost certainly counterproductive. What we need is a national commitment to those who "work hard and play by the rules," not efforts to single out those who venture into depressed communities to create jobs.

The crux of my disagreement with these campaigns comes down to their push for hikes in the minimum wage. Though I'm not reflexively opposed to minimum-wage laws, I tend to think that raising the minimum wage too sharply is likely to result in the exclusion of large numbers of people from formal labor markets. And, in the shadow economy, poor people become more vulnerable to the depredations of employers far more unscrupulous than Wal-Mart. That is unambiguously bad. The policy proposal I favor, drawn from the work of Columbia University economist Edmund Phelps and championed by neoliberal extraordinaire and syndicated columnist Matt Miller, is a program of wage subsidies designed to top up hourly wages so that all workers make something like $9 to $10 an hour.

But critics on the left counter that this is inadequate. By permitting employers to pay low wages, they argue that you are devaluing the labor of the very poor. (As a civil servant, my father made a lot less than various captains of industry. To me, though, he was worth just as much. And the fact that he will collect Social Security doesn't diminish him in the slightest, as far as I'm concerned. Of course, I'm biased.) Though I see the appeal in this style of argument, I also tend to think that employers pay wages closely tied to productivity. (Except in those cases—such as in sports—where small differences in ability produce disproportionately large differences in outcome, but that's a whole other can of worms.) Because some employees are too expensive to employ at higher wages—language barriers, a lack of schooling, disciplinary problems, and absenteeism are among the many factors that separate recent immigrants, those who grew up in severe poverty, and those who've been institutionalized from everyone else—they are more likely to be completely excluded (i.e., to join the ranks of the nonemployed or underemployed) than they are to benefit from a steep statutory increase in the minimum wage. When you consider the very rigid labor markets found in Western Europe, where vast numbers of increasingly disaffected young people find themselves left behind without the social protections that come with holding a legal job, you can see the downside risks.

The great contribution of neoliberalism was in recognizing that employers aren't the bad guys. They're just one group of relatively well-off people who benefit from the efforts of low-wage workers. But so do all relatively well-off people, which is why it's better to use taxes to meet our obligations as a society. (It might make sense to pass a modest increase in the minimum wage so that employers don't "free-ride," and yet we have to acknowledge that, in the process, we'll exclude some nontrivial number of workers. These design principles have to be puzzled through.) Silly though it may sound, the New Democrats were hoping to build a "win-win" society. Something like wage subsidies would eventually pay for themselves through reduced prison and social welfare costs. Satisfying though it might be, demonizing employers will never have the same result.

The tragedy is that no one is willing to make this case. That's a serious problem.

FORMER TNR REPORTER-RESEARCHER AND FREQUENT TNR ONLINE CONTRIBUTOR REIHAN SALAM IS CURRENTLY GUESTBLOGGING *&C.* READ MORE OF HIS POSTS AND OTHER TNR ONLINE CONTENT AT TNR.COM.

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On the Hill

Party of Lincoln

BY MICHAEL CROWLEY

WHEN LINCOLN CHAFEE learned that George W. Bush was nominating John Bolton to be ambassador to the United Nations, his heart sank. As a moderate Republican senator from Rhode Island, Chafee must constantly choose between his conservative party and his liberal instincts (and constituents). Such choices clearly torment the genial New Englander.

"I remember when the secretary of state called and said the president is going to appoint John Bolton," says Chafee, who knew, as a key swing vote on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he would attract plenty of attention during Bolton's confirmation hearings. "Just leaving Rhode Island to come down, the whole way back to Washington, I felt some kind of dread." The memory brought to Chafee's face the anguished look of a "Fear Factor" contestant eating an eyeball. "Of course I want to be a team player, but, *my gosh*, that's a heavy load!"

These days, Chafee's life is one heavy load after another. Arguably Washington's chief Republican heretic, Chafee was alone among Senate Republicans in opposing the Iraq war resolution and one of two against the 2001 Bush tax cuts; last month, he joined two other Republican moderates in voting against his party's annual budget resolution. But lately, he's been trying to make some amends with the party he has spent the past few years needling. That's because Chafee faces a rough reelection campaign next year. And he understands that, without the help of the very Republicans he infuriates, he could be toast.

CHAFEE IS AN unlikely figure to be at the center of such intense political currents. He has a preternaturally serene disposition, and none of the manic tendencies of some of his more zealous colleagues. When I met with him one recent morning, he was still groggy from a late budget vote. "We were here until 1 a.m.," he said somewhat plaintively. Amid the talk of politics and policy, few things seemed to excite him more than a discussion of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the mention of which caused him to hop up and retrieve a calendar with images of the pristine reserve. "I was up in the Refuge just this month, way on top of the world," he said, almost dreamily. "The rolling grasslands! ... The wildlife! ... The caribou! ... All sorts of brown squirrels and prairie chickens." For a moment he was lost in a reverie.

But recently, he's been in the throes of an unforgiving political reality. For weeks, Chafee said he was "inclined" to support Bolton's nomination, but later mused to a reporter that Rhode Islanders were "overwhelmingly" opposed to it. Nevertheless, he seemed ready to back Bolton—until Ohio Republican George Voinovich balked in an April 19 committee hearing, after which Chafee hemmed and hawed again. As THE NEW REPUBLIC went to press, Chafee was pledging to vote for Bolton—but no one would be shocked if he wavered yet another time (or two, or three).

The Bolton fight is just the latest will-he-or-won't-he saga of Chafee's Senate career. Last fall, for instance, he suggested that he would support Bush for president, then withdrew his endorsement, and finally cast a write-in vote for George Bush—senior. Then, on Election Day itself, Chafee kicked off a new drama when he said he wouldn't rule out changing parties; Senate Democratic Leader Harry Reid urged him to defect. But a week later, Chafee declared that he would, in fact, remain a Republican. For now. The legendary *Providence Journal* political columnist Charlie Bakst pronounced this "an excruciating episode that has done the senator no good in Rhode Island or in Washington."

Chafee has been walking this tightrope from the day he arrived in the Senate in 1999 to fill the seat of his late father, Republican John Chafee. But an increasingly nasty political climate makes it difficult. Chafee often votes with Democrats but dutifully attends his party's weekly lunches. "I argue in caucus, I make my points even knowing I'm vastly outnumbered," Chafee says. "But, at the same time, I understand they'd like to grab me by the lapels and say, 'Are you ever going to support the president's agenda?' " One result is that Chafee is something of a loner on the Hill. "He wanders the halls alone," says one Senate Democratic aide.

Exasperated as they are, however, Republicans are now riding to Chafee's rescue as he faces possible challenges from both his left and right. Conservatives are urging Cranston Mayor Steve Laffey, a hard-edged populist, to mount a primary challenge. (One Republican said to be egging on Laffey is Oklahoma Senator James Inhofe, who would like to be rid of Chafee's dissident vote on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, which Inhofe chairs.) Laffey would be a tough foe: Rhode Island may be liberal, but its Republican primary voters are very conservative; internal polling by both parties shows Laffey trouncing Chafee.

But the Republican establishment, convinced that only a moderate like Chafee can survive in liberal Rhode Island, is trying to keep Laffey out of the race. National GOP Chairman Ken Mehlman has called Laffey personally to ask him not to run. Meanwhile, top Republican senators, including Majority Leader Bill Frist and conservative Majority Whip Mitch McConnell, have recently hosted fund-raisers for Chafee. Former Republican Party Chairman Ed Gillespie has another lined up.

Even if Laffey doesn't run, Chafee will need his party's helping hand. Rhode Island voted for John Kerry by a 60–39 margin, guaranteeing an uphill fight for any Republican, even one with a locally famous family name. Two Rhode Island

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Making Diversity a Reality

KURT M. LANDGRAF,
PRESIDENT & CEO, ETS

Like many organizations committed to social justice, ETS faces challenges in creating and sustaining a diverse workforce. In the field of educational measurement, workplace diversity is essential to creating tests that are fair and free of bias.

At the same time, state and federal governments, by adopting higher standards for public schools, are placing greater demands on those who develop, administer and score tests and interpret test results.

For ETS, these are parallel priorities. We insist on a diverse workforce, and we insist on meeting the higher standards that are at the core of education reform.

Yet, in the 2000-2001 academic year, U.S. universities conferred only about 500 doctorates in educational psychology, evaluation and measurement. Of these, only 18 percent came from underrepresented groups, and included many international scholars who later returned home to take up their profession.

This shortfall is further proof that our society is not doing enough to expand educational opportunity across ethnic lines. However, the response that "We want to have a more diverse workforce, but we just can't find enough qualified candidates" doesn't cut it. Worse than an excuse, it's frequently code for something else entirely.

ETS's response has been different. Rather than falling back on excuses, we're recruiting aggressively among ethnically diverse groups, and we're focusing on professional development opportunities to help retain and promote from within.

We are also working to enhance our relationships with institutions that share our values. For example, we're interacting with members of both Historically Black Colleges and Universities and the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities on recruitment.

And each summer, we invite educators and students from underrepresented groups to participate in our Visiting Scholars and Summer Intern programs. These talented individuals enrich our test development process, and help ensure that the concerns of underrepresented groups regarding fairness are represented at ETS.

If American democracy is to thrive, we must achieve equity and excellence in education. ETS's founders believed that access to learning is essential to quality of life and as such should be available to all, and it's what we believe today.

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Democrats are vying to face him in the general election—the young secretary of state, Matt Brown, and the fortuitously named Sheldon Whitehouse, a former state attorney general. Chafee lucked out when the state's top two Democrats—Representatives Patrick Kennedy and Jim Langevin—each passed on the race. But even the lesser-known Brown and Whitehouse are plenty threatening. One recent poll showed Chafee beating both men but garnering less than 50 percent against each—the classic sign of an endangered incumbent. And, while Democrats have spent much of the past few years complimenting Chafee's courage and principle, that storyline is starting to change. They are now calling attention to Chafee's repeated votes for Bush's judicial nominees and Cabinet officials, and his backing for Bush's latest proposal to apply price-indexing to Social Security. "He's supposed to be this great maverick-slash-moderate," says one Democratic strategist. "But, at the end of the day, he lacks a certain conviction."

Such talk reflects an understanding among Democrats that their road back to a Senate majority probably requires them to take on Republican moderates about whom they feel a reservoir of goodwill. Just as the GOP has steadily knocked off conservative Southern Democrats, even those willing to work with them on occasion, Democratic strategists say they must do the same. Meanwhile, a Senate Democratic leadership aide says the party has virtually given up hope of getting Chafee to defect. Not only does Chafee apparently harbor a sentimental fidelity to his father's party, but he has already cast his lot with the GOP's 2006 campaign apparatus.

A DESIRE TO build Republican goodwill in the face of this new Democratic enmity could be one reason Chafee has been more supportive of Bolton than many Democrats had expected. Democrats point to an interview Chafee gave last December to the Associated Press, in which he suggested that his coming election made him more likely to side with the president: "You tend to be supportive as you come into the [election] cycle. If I need their help occasionally, I'm going to have to help them," Chafee said. (He did add, "I'm not going to sacrifice my principles, either.") Chafee insists that he has always given deference to presidential nominees; but he can't be unaware of the White House's keen interest in his vote.

There's no easy solution for Chafee. As one Rhode Island GOP operative sympathetic to Laffey puts it, Chafee is "on the horns of a dilemma: What makes him a strong general election candidate makes him a weak primary candidate. And what makes him a strong primary candidate hurts him in the general." When I met with him, Chafee seemed despairing of the campaign labors ahead during a coming Senate recess. "Being in cycle, as they call it"—he sighs—"it's hard work, it's always work, work, work. Fund-raising, going all over the state. So recesses you go home and hustle." Just thinking about it seemed to make him tired. It's a heavy load indeed. ■

Trinidad Dispatch

Close, but...

BY JOSHUA HAMMER

IT'S THURSDAY EVENING in Trinidad, Cuba, and Fidel Castro has a captive audience. In house after house on the cobblestoned main street of this river town 200 miles southeast of Havana, the image of *El Comandante* flickers from Soviet-era TV sets. Of course, it's hard not to score high ratings when your country has only two TV stations, both of them state-run, and the neighborhood Committee for the Defense of the Revolution keeps watch on who's tuning in and who isn't. But the old days of unquestioning Fidelism are long gone, and several Trinidad residents were less than enthusiastic about the *comandante*'s droning monologue. A waiter in one of the handful of semi-legal private restaurants in Trinidad groaned as Fidel's speech entered its fifth hour. He studied the gaunt figure on the TV screen. "He's losing it," the waiter muttered.

Forty-six years after Fidel Castro seized power, the majority of his country's eleven million people have known no other leader. But that may soon change. Although the word "succession" is taboo in Cuba's government-controlled media, the leader's health has been a growing source of speculation here. In recent years, Fidel has suffered several fainting spells, as well as a shattered kneecap and broken arm in a fall. One Western scholar told me that, at a recent appearance, the Cuban dictator appeared to be wearing a heavily padded suit to disguise his increasingly frail physique. As a result, more and more Cubans have begun to consider the once-unthinkable: life after Fidel.

For the Bush administration, that can't happen soon enough. In recent years, the White House, which has staffed the State Department's Latin American Affairs bureau with hard-line Cuban exiles, has put the squeeze on Havana, tightening the economic embargo and cracking down on cultural exchanges and family visits. The belief in Washington is that inflicting more misery is the best way to guarantee a thaw after Castro falls. The U.S. strategy is, "Give them no life preservers," one Western diplomat in Havana says. And yet, even as Castro falters, the White House is unlikely to get its wish. Change is likely to come slowly in post-Castro Cuba. In fact, Castro and the ruling elite appear to be paving the way for an authoritarian successor—and the U.S. crackdown might only bolster Fidel and his friends.

WHILE CRITICS OF U.S. policy toward Cuba often complain that politicians are forced to placate Florida's Cuban exiles, recent U.S. moves suggest that the Bush administration is eager, rather than begrudging, in its efforts to tighten the

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screws on Havana. Administration officials hope that sharp economic pain will put pressure on Cuba to enact reform—or, better still, that it will bring down Castro's regime altogether. James Cason, a tough Latin America specialist appointed by President Bush in 2002 to head the U.S. Interests section in Havana, courts pro-embargo dissidents and launches frequent barbs at Castro. He recently put up a mock Cuban prison cell in the lobby of the U.S. high-rise overlooking el Malecon, Havana's seafront boulevard. He is known to refer to his time in Havana as "living behind enemy lines."

Meanwhile, the U.S. Treasury Department has slashed the number of licenses it grants to American groups for cultural and academic visits to Cuba (I visited Cuba on one such difficult-to-obtain license). Licensed travelers can no longer bring back the $100 worth of Cuban goods they had been allowed for decades. Treasury has also cut the number of visits that Cuban exiles in the United States can make to family members back home, from one a year to one every three years, and slashed the amount of money the visitors can give relatives, from $3,000 to $300.

But diplomats, analysts, and Cubans themselves believe that Bush's hard-line approach isn't working. The Cuban government's political repression, economic crackdown, and tight control of information, they argue, may well keep control firmly in the hands of the regime—at least for several years after Castro dies. In the last two years, Castro and his associates have tightened tax requirements for the handful of private businesses that are allowed to operate, forcing many to close. The number of people who now work for themselves rather than for the state fell from a high of 209,000 to about 150,000 last year. Ordinary shops no longer accept U.S. dollars from Cubans, and the government demands a 10 percent service charge to change dollars into "convertible pesos"—a fee that, because of a peso reevaluation, is effectively about to double, in another blow to Cuban families that depend on remittances from Miami for survival. Castro's close relationship with President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela has helped the country stay afloat: Chavez sends his compadre 53,000 barrels of oil per day to keep the lights on.

Meanwhile, reformers are increasingly targeted. "There is—what would you call it?—a pogrom going on now," says Oswaldo Paya, the country's leading dissident. According to Paya, several months ago, Castro's secret police began tracking down all 45,000 signatories to the Varela Project, a list of names calling for freedom of the press, free enterprise, and multiparty elections. "They tell them they will lose their jobs unless they remove their names," he says. Paya, who looked tired and flu-ridden, is himself under round-the-clock surveillance.

This crackdown is unlikely to ease any time soon. Most diplomats in Havana believe that power post-Fidel will likely pass to Raul Castro, Fidel's younger brother. While considered to be more flexible than Fidel, Raul still commands the allegiance of the Cuban military and would probably support much of the same rigid central planning, press censorship, and one-party rule espoused by Fidel. So, too, would the generals and party hacks at the top levels of the Central Committee. Government insiders who dare to stray from the party line are silenced: When grumbling arose over Castro's policy of dispatching thousands of physicians to Venezuela in exchange for oil, Castro, according to a diplomat in Havana, promptly forced one of his ministers to step down. "In the last two years, there has been little dissent within the government," one European diplomat in Havana told me. "There is no group of potential reformers that we can focus on." Liberals in Cuba are bitterly divided, with hard-liner dissidents like Martha Beatriz Roque, a favorite of the White House, attacking Paya for his willingness to enter into a dialogue with the Cuban government, and Paya claiming that Roque is too close to Cuban exiles in Florida.

THE WHITE HOUSE'S harder line may even bolster popular support for Castro. Many Cubans still manifest a sense of pride in their homegrown revolution and get defensive when challenged about Castro or their political system. "Don't lecture us about freedom of the press when you don't have it in your own country," one government-sanctioned novelist told me at a meeting I had with members of a writer's cooperative in Havana. He cited the Bush administration's quiet payoffs to several journalists to be mouthpieces for administration policy and the high profile of Fox News as "evidence" of government control of the media. In the town of Cienfuegos on the southern coast, several writers and artists insisted that most Cuban dissidents were "mercenaries" and "American agents" on the "U.S. government payroll."

Paya insists that the economic embargo has been a failure, and he and other anti-embargo dissidents argue that it allows Castro to portray the United States as the enemy of the man on the street. Many others agree. One European diplomat in Havana points out that Cuba gets most of its necessities—such as medicine and oil—from other countries, while using the embargo to intensify anti-American sentiment. Although Paya has met with Cason, he goes out of his way to stress his distance from the Americans. "We're not in business with anyone," he says. "We represent the interests of the Cubans."

Cason, in fact, may be one of the Cuban government's best assets. Castro and his friends have scored political points with many Cubans by ridiculing the hard-line American envoy at every turn. TV spots portray him as a cartoon rat and dismiss him as a servile Army "corporal" kowtowing to the "generals" in Washington. And Cason's charges that the Cuban government regularly violates human rights has played right into Castro's hands. Now Cason can't leave his downtown Havana office without confronting a stark mural, directly in front of the U.S. Interests section, that portrays hooded, humiliated prisoners at Abu Ghraib. It's an image of the United States that may endure well after Castro is gone. ■

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Is George Lakoff misleading Democrats?

Wooden Frame

BY NOAM SCHEIBER

IT'S SHOW-AND-TELL day in 50 Birge Hall. At least as close to it as you get at an elite university like Berkeley. George Lakoff, the instructor for this introductory cognitive science course, has asked students to bring in examples of popular "texts" containing hidden metaphorical meanings—the kind that play subtle tricks on the human mind. First out of the gate is a British student who holds up an ad for Splenda, the sugar substitute. The ad features a young girl sitting on her father's shoulders and covering his eyes with two large cookies. "Lucky girl," it reads. "You've got a Splenda daddy."

"What do you see in that ad?" Lakoff asks the class. "What is going on there? Why is the girl on her daddy's shoulders?" Soon the metaphors come gushing forth. "Security," says the woman who brought the ad. Others chime in: "Food is love." "Girls are sweet." "Good is up." "Knowing is seeing." A girl in an oversized red sweater with a spacey voice asks, "Isn't this a play on sugar daddy?" A hipster in the front row explains that the photo isn't necessarily staged—that the photographer probably snapped a hundred pictures of the same characters and just naturally gravitated toward "the one with all those entailments."

This cycle repeats itself more or less for the entire 80-minute period. A seemingly ordinary looking picture or text is presented to the class, which then deconstructs it at Lakoff's urging. There is a paragraph from this year's State of the Union speech. Then a quote from Ralph Nader. Finally, Lakoff shares his own example, culled from the day's *New York Times* op-ed page. The discussion turns to whether objectivity is possible, since every journalist brings his own "frames"—the metaphorical hard-wiring that helps him make sense of the world—to his writing. This prompts one student to recommend that journalists be forced to list their frames alongside their bylines, so readers will be aware of their biases. Another concludes, plaintively, "There are no facts."

This is the kind of exercise that must reinforce just about every conservative stereotype of liberal academics. But lately it's politically savvy Democrats who've been wringing their hands over Lakoff. That's because, in the last two years, the Berkeley linguist has become one of the party's chief advisers on the subtle art of framing—that is, evoking metaphors that leave voters with favorable impressions of your positions. For example, Lakoff has encouraged Democrats to "reframe" the tax debate as a discussion about investments in vital services and infrastructure rather than an onerous burden that citizens must be relieved of. (The latter, Lakoff never tires of pointing out, is a conservative frame.) Democrats from Howard Dean to Hillary Clinton to Tom Daschle, seeking a way to reverse the party's political fortunes, have solicited his opinions.

Many Democrats, however, see Lakoff's advice as a dangerously seductive tonic—the idea that the party can right its course merely by concocting better buzzwords. "Lakoff suggests that reframing American politics according to liberal values—in essence rewiring our collective circuitry—is but a matter of simple wordplay," Marc Cooper recently wrote in *The Atlantic*. Others wonder what a latte-sipping linguistics professor from Berkeley could possibly have to say to Democratic strategists. The party already has a tough enough time countering the charge of cultural liberalism that Republicans constantly level against it. As Dan Gerstein, a former aide to Joe Lieberman, put it in a recent *Wall Street Journal* op-ed, "[M]aybe all that needs to be said about our values vacuum ... is: Lay off Lakoff and hire Hillary."

But, despite all appearances to the contrary (and I mean *all* appearances—during one of our conversations, Lakoff was literally sipping a latte with dark chocolate sprinkles), Lakoff the intellectual doesn't much resemble the caricature he evokes. His response to the student who questions the existence of facts is to reassure her that, "There are facts. Facts matter. You just have to frame them properly." Lakoff also has an unusually sophisticated understanding of the American right. He has, for example, digested many of the tomes penned by conservative evangelical leaders like James Dobson. And he is quick to chide fellow liberals who assign cynical motives to their ideological foes or who consider working-class people dupes for voting Republican. Lakoff's 1996 book, *Moral Politics*, was a remarkably shrewd assessment of the way people process political information. Americans, Lakoff argued, vote their value systems. They care very little about individual issues; these things only matter to the extent that they reflect a voter's worldview. The implication was that Democrats need to pay attention to the powerful, if not always obvious, signals they send about values through their choice of rhetoric and policies. Republicans have been doing this for years.

The real problem with Lakoff is that, as he has grown more prominent in Democratic circles, he has begun substituting the ideologically agnostic critique he laid out in *Moral Politics* with the liberal prescriptions he favors personally. Lately he has begun promoting the idea that Democrats can regain their majority by embracing their more liberal impulses while emphasizing the values that underlie their positions. It is Democrats' ineptness at showcasing their values,

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The *real* issues of Social Security reform

There is no longer any doubt that Social Security needs to be reformed. The nation's troubled retirement program will begin running a deficit in just 12 years. Overall, the program faces unfunded liabilities of more than $12 trillion. But while the politicians in Washington debate whether this represents a crisis or just a big problem, the Cato Institute believes it is an opportunity to build a new and better retirement program for all Americans.

Ownership

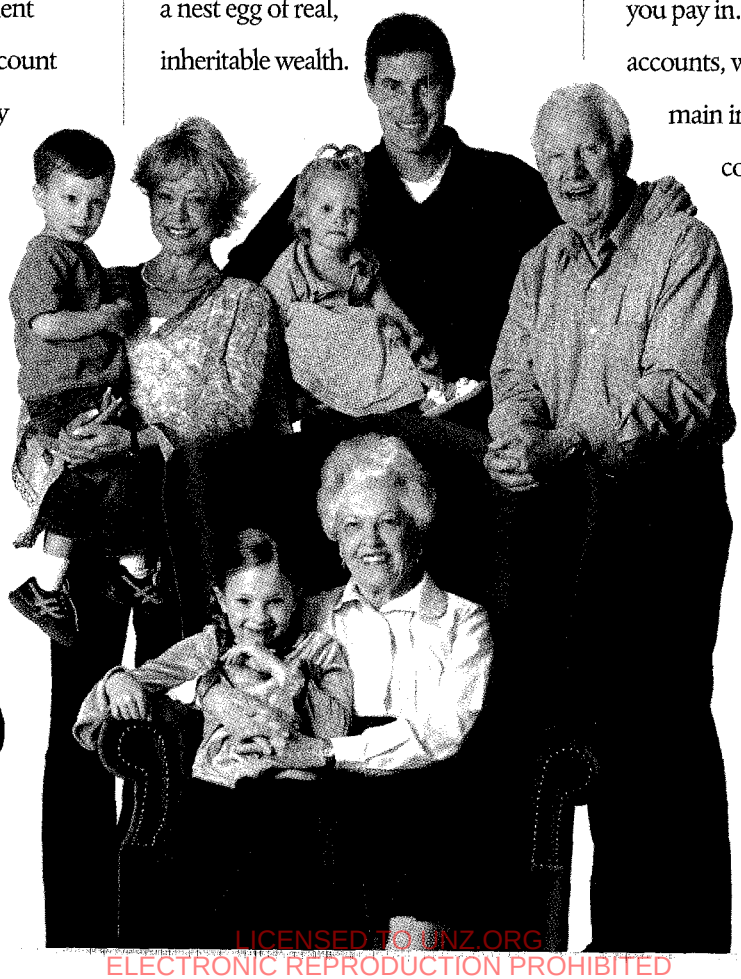
Under the current Social Security system you have no legal, contractual, or property rights to your benefits. What you receive from Social Security is entirely up to the 535 members of Congress. But personal retirement accounts would give you ownership and control over your retirement funds. The money in your account would belong to you—money the politicians could never take away.

Inheritability

Because you don't own your Social Security benefits under the current system, they are not inheritable. Millions of workers are not able to pass anything on to their loved ones. But personal retirement accounts would change that by enabling you to build a nest egg of real, inheritable wealth.

Choice

Choice is part of the essence of America. Yet when it comes to retirement, Congress forces all Americans into a one-size-fits-all, cookie-cutter retirement program, a system that cannot pay the benefits it has promised and under which you have no right to the money you pay in. With personal retirement accounts, workers who wanted to remain in traditional Social Security could do so. But younger workers who wanted a choice to save and invest for their future retirement would have that option.



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Lakoff says, not their liberalness per se, that has hurt them in the past. This has, not surprisingly, endeared him to the party's liberal base. But, if this is the lesson Democrats take from Lakoff's work, they could be in for a long, cold exile.

THE DAY I met him in his Berkeley office, with its Miró prints and its eighth-floor view of the Golden Gate Bridge, Lakoff was stewing over recent criticism from fellow Democrats. Lakoff is, by nature, an affable and generous man; his doughy cheeks and close-cropped beard exude a warm-and-fuzzy, NPR-style liberalism. That his face appeared to register a hint of angst probably had more to do with getting up at six that morning to pitch the Hewlett Foundation, which is considering awarding him a grant. Still, Lakoff was sufficiently exorcised that he had stayed up late the night before responding to his critics. The first thing he asked me as we walked into his office was whether I had received the document he e-mailed to several dozen journalists and academics around two that morning.

In his own telling, Lakoff first got the idea for *Moral Politics* in 1994, while the GOP was busy taking control of Congress. Lakoff recalls perusing the House Republicans' *Contract With America* and thinking that their positions were utterly inconsistent. The Gingrichites claimed to be pro-life, but they favored the death penalty and opposed government-funded prenatal care. They harped on family values but favored legislation that would expose children to more carcinogens. They claimed patriotism as their highest virtue but constantly fulminated against government.

Then Lakoff had a second, more alarming epiphany: Not only was the sum-total of GOP positions incoherent; but, since he personally took the opposite position in nearly every instance, he was no better.

Lakoff began groping for the thread that connected these seemingly arbitrary views. What he came up with forms the backbone of *Moral Politics*. In the book, Lakoff divides people into two ideal types: the strict father and the nurturant parent. The first believes the world is a nasty, dangerous place and that humans are fundamentally corrupt. He protects his family by asserting absolute authority over them; the father's command is never questioned. Children are taught to be moral, self-sufficient adults through a combination of reward and punishment (often corporal). Once the child reaches adulthood, the father no longer plays much of a role in his life.

The nurturant parent is also deeply concerned with protecting his children and raising them to be upstanding adults. The difference lies in his view of human nature. Nurturers believe children respond best when parents explain their actions and encourage kids to ask questions. Nurturant parents place their highest priority on values like empathy and compassion. Whereas the strict father favors a tough-love approach to child-rearing, the nurturer cultivates deep emotional bonds. Nurturers believe children respond best not to the threat of punishment but to inner motivation and the desire to emulate their parents.

To make the leap from child-rearing to politics, Lakoff posited that people think of the nation as a family and the government as a parent. The way they view government typically follows from their views on child-rearing. So, for example, conservatives believe that single women who get pregnant should be punished by having to bring their child to term; a society that fails to punish women for promiscuous behavior is a society that encourages it. (The idea that abortion is murder becomes a kind of after-the-fact rationalization.) The death penalty is not only acceptable but moral for the same reason: People who commit murder must themselves be punished. Not to take a life in response would only encourage more murders. Conservatives also oppose most social programs because, like strict fathers, they believe able-bodied adults should fend for themselves. Giving them unearned benefits only undermines this ethic.

Lakoff's ideas can come off as a little precious. Several times during our conversation, I repeated some pet term of his only to privately wonder what the hell I was talking about. (Viz.: "What of the people who ... have a strict father outlook even if they're biconceptual?") But the basic point, once you peel back all the academic-speak, is a profound one: People don't vote for the more objectively compelling set of policies; they vote for the candidate who best reflects their moral system—whether it's the strict father, nurturant parent, or some combination of the two. (Lakoff concedes in his book that, in reality, many people are a combination.)

According to this logic, Democrats should choose their positions not on the merits of each individual issue, but for their collective usefulness at convincing voters their worldview is sound. Lakoff suggests thinking about politics the way Billy Beane, the Oakland A's general manager featured in Michael Lewis's book *Moneyball*, thinks about building a baseball team. Beane's philosophy is that no single player is particularly important. The idea is to pick the nine players who collectively produce the most runs. Likewise, in Lakoff's telling, specific policies are less important than the larger goal of conveying the right set of values. Moreover, once the policies are chosen with this goal in mind, Democrats must frame them in ways that highlight the connection to people's worldviews—the way voters think of innocent life when Republicans use a phrase like "partial-birth abortion."

These insights help explain last fall's presidential election, among other things. For several months now, liberals

Agree? Disagree?

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have wondered how John Kerry lost despite taking majority positions on most issues—from preserving Social Security benefits, to expanding health care coverage, to suggesting the war in Iraq had made Americans less safe, to his commitment to work with the United Nations. From a Lakovian perspective, however, the loss was not particularly surprising: Voters infer values from the combination of positions and rhetoric a candidate embraces. The values they inferred in Kerry's case were not values they shared. For example, while voters like big government in practice, most oppose it on the level of principle. But Kerry never found a credible way to signal he wasn't a devout proponent of big government the way, say, Bill Clinton did by supporting welfare reform. And he never articulated a set of values that would justify these policies independent of his faith in government. Likewise, though voters favor working with allies, polls suggest they worry that a candidate who prioritizes alliances above security isn't sufficiently committed to defending the country. Kerry never convinced them otherwise. By contrast, George W. Bush's positions and his language reinforced what voters liked about him—his moral clarity—particularly at a time of heightened national security concerns.

Moral Politics sold only about 6,000 copies the year it came out—a strong showing for an academic book, but far below the expectations of its author, who felt he had crafted a best-seller. But, rather than fade away into out-of-the-way corners of college campuses, the book kept selling. Another year passed, and the book sold 6,000 more copies. Another year, another 6,000 copies.

The steady trade in *Moral Politics* didn't exactly make Lakoff a household name. But it did gradually raise his profile in the world of liberal activists, for whom he began doing the occasional consulting project. Then, in 2002, one of the activists he'd met through this work—a man named Peter Teague—landed at the Nathan Cummings Foundation in New York, which distributes grants to nonprofits. Teague asked Lakoff to advise these groups on how to broaden their appeal (for example, by connecting environmentalism to other issues, such as national security) and on basic communications tactics (such as how to avoid obscure jargon and how to frame statements in ways that don't implicitly accept conservative premises—e.g., the trade-off between saving jobs and saving spotted owls). In late 2002, the Foundation awarded Lakoff a one-year, $125,000 grant for this purpose. Soon, Lakoff's telephone was ringing off the hook with calls from groups like ACORN and the League of Conservation Voters. (The Foundation gave Lakoff another $95,000 the following year, as well as a $280,000 grant for the Rockridge Institute, the think tank he helped found to put his ideas into practice.)

As Lakoff's consulting became more visible, word of his deeds spread to Capitol Hill. In the spring of 2003, he got a call from an aide to Senator Byron Dorgan, head of the Senate's Democratic Policy Committee, asking him to address the Democratic senators at their annual retreat on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Dorgan had read from *Moral Politics* and found the ideas intriguing. He asked Lakoff to build his presentation around three questions: What is framing? What is moral politics? And what is it that Frank Luntz, the pollster and message guru, seems to be doing so effectively for the Republican Party? Lakoff happily complied. At the retreat, he instructed the senators on the differences between nurturant parents and strict fathers and on how people's political worldviews reflected their views on child-rearing. He explained that Luntz was brilliant at tapping into these views and that Democrats needed to do the same thing.

According to Lakoff, the general reaction was along the lines of, "Oh my God, that's how this works." (Several Senate aides I spoke with offered similar accounts of subsequent presentations.) Hillary Clinton invited Lakoff to dinner one night during the retreat with then–Democratic leader Tom Daschle. At the time, the Democrats were fighting Bush's proposed repeal of the dividend income tax and his efforts to make several temporary tax cuts permanent. Daschle was so impressed with Lakoff's spiel that he asked him to address the senators in Washington when they returned to plot strategy. "[Daschle] said, 'OK, I'll tell you what. ... We'll mail you our [proposal] ... and come to the caucus and tell us about this,' " recalls Lakoff. In the month or so that followed, Daschle's office made a point of patching Lakoff into its weekly 9 a.m. message meeting by phone from Berkeley.

Yet, by and large, once he strayed from the broader point about the role of values, Lakoff's advice in these situations was naïve. An aide to Nancy Pelosi told me, for example, that Lakoff advised Democratic House members last December to oppose Social Security privatization by emphasizing the biblical obligation to honor one's parents. On one level, it made sense to appeal to values rather than to focus on the benefit cuts that privatization would entail, which could etch the image of tax-and-spend liberalism further into voters' minds. The problem was the specific values Lakoff chose to highlight. Pollster Guy Molyneux has conducted extensive survey research on attitudes toward entitlement spending. He says that, when it comes to values, voters respond much better to arguments based on fairness—for example, that they earned their Social Security benefits by working hard and paying into the system all their lives—than to arguments based on obligations to fellow citizens. That's why, even though Social Security acts largely as a social insurance program, FDR designed it to look like a private insurance plan, in which your benefits reflect your contributions.

Likewise, on the dividend tax cut, the point Lakoff emphasized most strongly to Democrats was the importance of not calling the proposal "tax relief." "They just bought into the [frame] of the other side," he harrumphs, still incredulous. "I said, 'The alternative is taxation as some sort of

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investment.'" But the "tax relief" metaphor resonates not simply because Republicans have successfully framed taxes as a punitive burden. It resonates because Americans have always had a deep suspicion of the government's power to tax, dating back to the founding of the republic. "Not using the phrase doesn't make people like taxes," says one former Senate aide, who rolled his eyes at Lakoff's prescriptions. "People have never liked taxes." Lakoff responds by suggesting that U.S. history supports more than one interpretation. For every tax rebellion, there is another example of citizens working together for the common good—the barn-raising of frontier lore. But this argument doesn't explain why tax rates in the United States have historically been so much lower than in, say, Scandinavia.

Other Lakoff recommendations have been even more off-base. A second Senate aide points to another Lakoff presentation last year. During the question-and-answer session that followed, the senators began pressing Lakoff for a single turn of phrase that would capture all the values reflected in the party's many positions. Lakoff hesitated a moment, then suggested, "Come home, America." The aide's jaw dropped. "I sort of said, 'What? Come home, America? That was the theme of the McGovern campaign in 1972. I don't think that's going to work.'" (Lakoff doesn't recall the specific phrase, but says it would have been only one of several he suggested in the course of the discussion.)

CLEARLY, LITTLE OF Lakoff's advice to Democrats in these situations has anything to do with the big ideas he lays out in *Moral Politics*, which functions on the abstract level of metaphors and moral systems, not the tactical level of sound bites and attack ads. But the Democratic politicians Lakoff advises typically want something more tangible than the basic observations that values drive voting behavior and that voters infer values from policies and rhetoric. They want specific instructions. Unfortunately, Lakoff is neither a message guru nor a pollster, as he is the first to concede. When he gives practical advice, he has no particular professional expertise to draw on; instead, he simply invokes his ideological predispositions. In these situations, Lakoff invariably recommends the kind of liberal policies and catchphrases that reflect his own nurturant worldview and that, as a result, don't often burst with electoral appeal.

The case in point is *Don't Think of an Elephant!*, the *New York Times* best-seller Lakoff wrote in five weeks last summer. In it, Lakoff argues that Republicans have spent the last 40 years embracing the values of their hardest-core supporters. They win elections because people in the political center find these values compelling absent a clear alternative from Democrats. (Lakoff believes swing voters are people who subscribe to both strict father and nurturant parent models, depending on the situation. The party that succeeds is the party whose moral system gets elevated in the minds of these voters.) "The conservatives do not move at all to the left, and yet they win!" Lakoff writes.

According to *Don't Think*, Democrats should embrace the nurturant parent values of their most loyal supporters the same way Republicans have embraced strict fatherhood. "I think it's really important ... that [Democrats] not move to the right," Lakoff explains during our interview. "First, it's kind of dishonest, and one of the values of progressive thought is honesty. ... Secondly, when they move to the right outside the scope of their own values, then they basically help conservatives, they offend their base. They're no longer in a single moral system."

One obvious flaw in this recommendation is that it presumes a majority of Americans are nurturers by, well, nature. "I think there are more [born] Democrats than Republicans anyway," Lakoff says. At least for the moment, though, that claim is empirically false: In the last election, 45 percent of voters identified themselves as moderates, 34 percent as conservatives, and only 21 percent as liberals.

The bigger problem with Lakoff's advice is that it conflicts with recent history—even his own reading of it. As Lakoff explains in his books, both Clinton in 1992 and Bush in 2000 projected centrist values through their choice of rhetoric and policy. Clinton appealed to nurturers on the left by underscoring government's obligation to give everyone a shot at the good life (hence Clinton's support for education spending and national health care). But, for the strict fathers on the center-right, the message was that people had to earn that shot (hence Clinton's support for welfare reform, his tough stance on crime, and his rewards, such as college scholarships, to people who "work hard and play by the rules"). Clinton's 1992 campaign themes—hope, opportunity, responsibility—amounted to an affirmative statement of largely nurturant values that nonetheless vanquished the image of Democrats as moral relativists, permissive liberals, and effete cultural elites, everything strict fathers detest.

Likewise, in 2000, Bush invoked compassionate conservatism to appeal to both strict fathers on the right and nurturers on the center-left. For the right, there were tax cuts, the death penalty, and an end to foreign policy as social work. For the center-left, there was education spending, government-subsidized prescription drugs, immigration reform, and lots of photo-ops of Bush with black children. Bush's faith-based initiative actually appealed to both groups—to strict fathers who wanted to reduce government spending on social programs and to nurturant parents who believed in helping the poor. In a sort of mirror image of Clinton, Bush's 2000 campaign highlighted his strict father credentials while expelling the image of Republicans as nasty and mean—which is to say, hostile to nurturing.

Lakoff is uncharacteristically evasive when I ask him about the contradiction between his advice that Democrats hew closely to the nurturant model and his observation that Bush and Clinton won office by mixing the two value systems. The closest he came to addressing the point directly was to suggest Bush is really a far-right conservative who simply lied on the campaign trail in 2000. That's true enough in retrospect. But, of course, no one had any way of knowing

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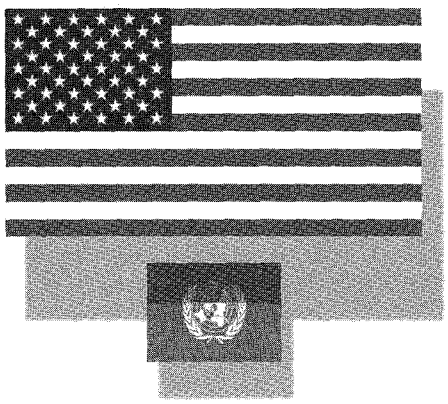
US Meddling In Global AIDS Crisis: "A Triumph of Ideology Over Science."



Intravenous drug use accounts for the majority of HIV cases in China, Iran, Afghanistan, Nepal, the Baltic states, and all of Central Asia, as well as much of Southeast Asia and South America. In Russia, where there are now more cases of HIV than in North America, as many as 80% of infections are attributed to injection drug use.[1]

"A large body of scientific evidence suggests that the free provision of clean needles curbs the spread of AIDS among drug users without increasing rates of addiction," said the US Surgeon General.[2] Needle exchanges have been endorsed by the AMA, the American Public Health Association, the National Academy of Sciences and the World Health Organization.

Despite these ringing recommendations, the State Department just sent a blunt message to the UN office responsible for drug education saying essentially: Shut up about needle exchanges or lose funding. Since the US is one of the major donors to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, the UN quickly folded. All references to harm reduction approaches are being deleted.[3]

The New York Times summed it up: "Washington's antipathy toward needle exchanges is a triumph of ideology over science, logic and compassion. The United States should help pay for these important programs. If it cannot bring itself to do so, it should at least allow the rest of the world to get on with saving millions of lives."[4]

Common Sense for Drug Policy
www.CommonSenseDrugPolicy.org www.DrugWarFacts.org
Mike Gray, Chair; Robert Field, Co-Chair

1. Human Rights Watch, "U.S. Gag on Needle Exchange Harms U.N. AIDS Efforts 2. US Surgeon General Dr. David Schacter, HHS 2000
3. The Observer, Feb 6, 2005, "US Cash Threat to AIDS War" 4. New York Times editorial, 2-26-05

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Bush was lying when they cast their votes. And, when Lakoff tries explaining away the success of Clinton's more conservative positions, it becomes clear that he is no longer drawing from the lessons of *Moral Politics* but from the imperatives of his personal political beliefs: "Why did he have to do that?" Lakoff asks when I mention welfare reform. "He didn't have to do it. I still don't understand it fully."

IN LIGHT OF Lakoff's ideological blind spots, it might be alarming that congressional Democrats, according to several aides, are currently holed away putting the finishing touches on a top-secret messaging project partly inspired by his work. But the Pelosi aide assured me that the Democratic leadership in Congress has thought carefully about what it should take from Lakoff and concluded that "he is valuable because he speaks to the broader issues"—how people process political rhetoric—not for his thoughts on specific tactical or policy questions. As evidence, the aide pointed me to a national security study group recently convened by Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, which is to be headed by former Secretary of Defense Bill Perry. "I don't think that's George Lakoff's strength, frankly, to say, 'This is how we would approach the issue of North Korea.' That's not his area of expertise."

We'll soon find out if party leaders are capable of making this distinction. The evidence at the state level isn't encouraging. In California, where he has some of his deepest political ties, Lakoff has huddled with local Democrats numerous times. He devoted his presentation at a February retreat to offering advice on the issues that will dominate next year's gubernatorial campaign, such as a Schwarzenegger-supported ballot measure requiring automatic spending cuts in the face of budget deficits. On that question, Lakoff told the Democratic legislators they needed to denounce the cuts for what they are: An attempt by Schwarzenegger to gut state social programs. "A budget cut is not just a budget cut," he says. "It's a social program cut. You know, nobody is cutting off funds for highways and so on."

According to Los Angeles–area Assemblyman Joe Canciamilla, one of a dying breed of moderate California Democrat, what the legislators took away from the discussion was: Toe the liberal line on policy and come up with the right buzzword to convey its popularity. For example, their Lakoff-inspired strategy on the budget measure is to denounce the automatic process that would threaten social programs as mindless "robocuts." Never mind that controlling spending is a perennially important issue in the state that enacted Proposition 13, which has kept property taxes artificially low for decades. Canciamilla doesn't blame Lakoff for the leftward drift of his caucus in recent years. But he does view Lakoff as an enabler. "[The trend] is in line with some things he has talked about with respect to messaging. ... [A] repackaging to make something more saleable," rather than a rethinking of substance. "That's where we are."

Among the activists and donors who form the Democratic Party's base—and who can exert enormous influence over party strategy—Lakoff's name has also become synonymous with tacking left substantively while deploying more artful rhetoric. Jon Cowan, the president of a new centrist Democratic advocacy group called Third Way, has spent the last several months in and out of meetings with high-powered donors. (Full disclosure: THE NEW REPUBLIC will be co-hosting a foreign policy retreat with Third Way this fall.) Cowan told me that Lakoff comes up in almost every conversation he has in these settings. "When we say our mission is to modernize the progressive cause—you get those words out—and the first thing everyone says is, 'Oh, have you read Lakoff?' It comes up in every meeting you're in." Cowan says that what these donors have in mind when they cite Lakoff is, "If we had a little bit better language, buzzwords, it would all work out OK."

THIS IS TECHNICALLY a misreading of Lakoff, who denounces the preoccupation with buzzwords. "One of the major mistakes liberals make is that they think they have all the ideas they need. They think that all they lack is media access. Or maybe some magic bullet phrases," he writes in *Don't Think*. "When you think you just lack words, what you really lack are ideas." But, by promoting the idea that Democrats can win without any substantive concessions to the political center, Lakoff essentially invites this interpretation.

Toward the end of our first afternoon together, I asked Lakoff for his thoughts on the Terri Schiavo episode. "The Republican strategy there had to do with becoming the party of compassion and life and making us the party of callousness and death, and that's what'll be remembered," he says. "A lot of [congressional Democrats] think they won. They have to give that up. They lost." This assessment struck me as devastatingly accurate. The party has been hurt for decades by the whiff of moral relativism surrounding its positions on abortion and euthanasia. Protesting the GOP's intervention to save a brain-damaged woman on largely procedural grounds may end up reinforcing those suspicions.

Then came Lakoff's recommendation: "[Democrats] have to come back with a series of pro-life programs"—pre- and postnatal care, end of life care, et cetera. All fine and good, I thought. But these are positions voters already associate with Democrats. What of the central question in this case: whether the government should intervene to keep alive a severely brain-damaged woman whose immediate family disagrees about her fate? If Democrats really want to become the party of life, don't they need a substantive concession—say, legislation requiring caregivers to "err on the side of life" in such cases—to make voters take notice? Don't they, in fact, need to move toward the center? "I know enough about neuroscience to know Terri Schiavo had no consciousness," Lakoff said. I took that as a no. ■

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Let's not talk about sex.

Prayer Center

BY MICHELLE COTTLE

IT'S 8 A.M. on a Tuesday, and Jim Wallis already looks tired. Rising from his cluttered desk in the rundown offices in the Northwest Washington, D.C., neighborhood where he has worked for the past quarter-century, the evangelical activist moves slowly. His voice is deep and drowsy, and there's a droop to his faded blue eyes that no amount of sleep seems likely to relieve.

Not that Wallis has time for sleep. Since January, he has been feverishly amassing frequent-flier miles promoting his new book, *God's Politics*, which slaps both liberals and conservatives for allowing Christianity to become a political tool serving the "pro-rich, pro-war, and only pro-American" agenda of the far right. In addition to the usual book-signings, Wallis has been spreading his gospel at churches coast-to-coast, in scores of op-eds and news stories, and on every political chat-fest from "The O'Reilly Factor" to the "Daily Show." More privately, he is providing politico-spiritual counsel to an electorally shell-shocked Democratic Party understandably charmed by his contention that the right's myopic obsession with abortion and gay rights is nothing short of "bad theology." And, all the while, Wallis keeps one eye on his day jobs as editor of *Sojourners*, the liberal Christian magazine he co-founded in 1971; president of Call to Renewal, the anti-poverty coalition he formed in 1995; visiting lecturer at Harvard, where he teaches a course on "Faith, Politics, and Society"; and father of two young boys, ages two and six. A man half Wallis's 56 years would be tempted to plead for a less punishing schedule, but the veteran activist embraces the current whirlwind as the providential opportunity of a lifetime.

Since his student days in the civil rights and antiwar movements, Wallis has been struggling to mobilize Christians against social problems traditionally identified as concerns of the political left, such as poverty and racism. But, in U.S. religious circles, such issues have long taken a backseat—especially in the political arena—to matters of personal morality like abortion and gay rights. Even Wallis admits that, despite years of sustained effort by *Sojourners* and Call to Renewal, the crusade to expand Americans' faith-based agenda has had limited success. "We'd be doing stuff, and I'd keep thinking, 'This is gonna really break through,'" he recalls. "But, the truth is, it has felt like a monologue of the religious right when it comes to values and politics and faith." Wallis harrumphs with disgust—his energy level rising along with his irritation—at how the left simply "handed over religion and values," a move he regards as "the biggest mistake progressives have made in decades." He marvels, "So then the right says, 'Thank you very much. Now we'll define religion in totally partisan ways. It will be a wedge and a weapon to divide and conquer for our partisan agenda.'"

But, according to Wallis, all that is about to change. Thanks to the prominent role "moral values" voters ostensibly played in reelecting George W. Bush, all of America is buzzing about the political power of religion. The mainstream press is suddenly fascinated by Christian culture, while panicked Democrats have vowed to shed their image as out-of-touch with—if not downright hostile to—people of faith. In turn, believers of all stripes are rushing to seize the moment. Even as the right wields its new electoral clout against gay marriage and judicial activism, members of what could loosely be termed the religious non-right are speaking out in an effort to change the public perception of what it means to be a Christian—and, more specifically, what it means to vote like one. These activists include not just liberals like Wallis, but more politically conservative players like Rich Cizik, vice president of governmental affairs at the National Association for Evangelicals (NAE), an umbrella group representing some 45,000 churches. The NAE's membership trends more Republican than Democrat. Even so, much like Wallis, the association laments the narrow agenda of the far right and has launched its own effort to steal some of the political spotlight and energy from the family values warriors. While it's fine for the religious right—"God bless 'em"—to focus solely on matters of personal morality, says Cizik, "I think we're ready to begin engaging on a whole plethora of issues." Or, as Wallis has taken to declaring—with the ringing satisfaction of a man who has labored more than three decades for this moment—"The monologue of the religious right is now over."

Maybe. But probably not. While Wallis is correct that the right's dominance of the values debate has been aided by the left's policy of disengagement (not to mention Democratic pols' distaste for, as a certain 2004 presidential candidate sniffed, "wear[ing] my religion on my sleeve"), the connection between evangelical religion and conservative politics in this country has deep and tangled roots. For reasons as much theological as political, white evangelicals (which is what people invariably mean when they talk about American evangelicalism) turned against systemic attempts to combat poverty and other societal ills long before anyone had ever heard of Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, or Ronald Reagan. More specifically, the right's fixation on personal piety, while arguably unbiblically narrow, nonetheless draws its resonance from a powerful combination of

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factors—evangelicalism's emphasis on personal redemption, the political realities of how to galvanize and sustain a mass movement, and the basic human fascination with sex—that aren't as easily applied to issues like tax policy and Social Security reform. As a result, although American evangelicals personally may be broadening their policy interests, the community's political activism, particularly on the domestic front, is unlikely to budge much beyond the same old "core issues" involving sex and school prayer. So, while it's tempting for those unnerved by the right's politicking to latch onto the idea that the moral high ground can be reclaimed—that poverty and pollution can be turned into the defining values issues of 2008—Democrats would be wise not to bet their political future on any divine, or even divinely inspired, intervention.

IN MANY WAYS, Wallis's jockeying with the religious right is less interesting—and certainly less complicated—than the efforts of people like Cizik, whose constituents share much of the right's politics and passions. Founded in 1942 to help unify the evangelical community, the NAE has long stood as an alternative to the more liberal National Council of Churches (formerly the Federal Council of Churches), which represents mainline Protestant denominations like the Episcopal, Presbyterian, and United Methodist churches. The NAE's political profile and access fluctuated significantly during its early years, until Reagan's embrace of evangelical voters helped bring it into the big leagues. (It was at the NAE's 1983 convention that Reagan made his famous Evil Empire speech denouncing communism.) Also during this period, however, the NAE, and evangelicalism in general, came to be seen by many as synonymous with the spotlight-grabbing religious right and its quest to impose Christian virtue on the broader public—a perception that grew as the right loudly battled the Clinton White House on issues involving abortion and gay rights. Asked to take over the NAE's lobbying shop in 1995, Cizik saw the job as an opportunity to confront evangelicals' failure to forge a more comprehensive public theology. "Evangelicals had to get beyond the political hamstrings of our own movement and address the wider array of issues," he notes. To this end, Cizik has spent the past decade pushing the NAE, which now claims to speak on behalf of more than 30 million evangelicals, to expand its policy focus to include everything from combating AIDS in Africa to strengthening environmental laws here at home. In a symbolic culmination of this effort, last October, the association's board approved a 26-page statement of beliefs titled "For the Health of the Nation: An Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility." Endorsed by more than 100 evangelical leaders, the document urges Christians toward political engagement not only on traditional family values issues, but also in "creation care" (as many evangelicals prefer to call environmentalism) and working to shrink the gap between rich and poor.

While he respects Wallis's high-profile push to broaden the definition of "moral values," Cizik sees the NAE, by dint of its conservative constituency, as better positioned than liberal groups to effect change. "Republicans control both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue," he reasons. "And evangelicals constitute 40 to 50 percent of the Republican base." Cizik notes that, in recent years, the NAE has enjoyed some legislative success with international affairs, pushing bills aimed at stemming religious persecution and child sex-trafficking. Now, he says, the moment has clearly arrived to make a move on the domestic front. Since the election, the association has been courting both lawmakers and the press, prompting a spate of publicity about its expanded agenda (especially in the area of creation care, a pet issue of Cizik's). On March 9, the NAE hosted a seminar at the National Press Club called "What is an Evangelical?" aimed at helping journalists see beyond the community's more colorful spokesmen. (Message: We are not all Jerry Falwell.) The next day, the organization gathered legislators and activists together on Capitol Hill to formally introduce its "Call to Civic Responsibility." "This is evangelicals' 'Here We Stand' document," gushes Cizik. "It may not be a magnum opus, but it's the best thing we've come out with yet."

BUT, EVEN MORE than Wallis's campaign, the NAE's plans to expand the evangelical agenda risk being derailed by the fact that many of its most politically entrenched Christian brethren don't want attention diverted from hot-button life and family issues. Though even über-conservatives pay lip service to the NAE's agenda, when it comes time to talk political priorities, the backpedaling begins. For instance, Focus on the Family's James Dobson was among the signatories of the "Call to Civic Responsibility." Since the statement's debut, however, Focus has repeatedly stressed that the primary interest of its ministry—and of evangelicals more broadly—is family values. Taking aim at the NAE's concerns about global warming, Focus Vice President Tom Minnery says disapprovingly, "That does not at all characterize the kind of issues that evangelicals are noted for being involved in. Marriage, family, judicial reform, and the various pro-life issues—those are the kinds of things that characterize evangelicals." Richard Land, head of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, voices similar skepticism: "It would take a whole lot more than the leadership of the NAE to divert the evangelical and Catholic base from the core issues. As long as there's a baby being killed every 20 seconds, as long as the courts are trying to force action on gay marriage that two-thirds of the American people don't want, the base will insist that these issues receive great emphasis." Of course the right worries about dividing the attention not only of lawmakers but also of the grassroots, says Michael Cromartie, vice president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center: "Life is full. People are trying to raise their children. How many issues can you have that much passion about changing the world?"

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Iran and Nuclear Weapons

What does the world, what does Israel have to fear?

Despite evasions, denials and equivocations, it is quite clear now that Iran is intensely pursuing the holy grail of nuclear weapons. The only question is whether it is six months or three years away from that goal. What would it mean to the world, what would it mean to Israel, if Iran succeeded in this quest and if nobody, no country, would prevent it?

What are the facts?

An existential danger. In 1981, Israel, in a daring raid, destroyed the Iraqi nuclear installation at Osirak. The whole world, sad to say, including the United States, condemned Israel for this "act of aggression." But, of course, Israel did the world a tremendous favor, a favor that was only grudgingly acknowledged many years later. Had it not been for Israel's decisive action, Saddam Hussein would indeed have had nuclear weapons. The Iraqi dictator would have been the undisputed master of the Middle East. The United States, indeed the whole world, would have been at his mercy.

> "...somebody...would have to preempt to keep Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons... The survival of the world is at stake."

An even much greater danger now threatens us from Iran, because Iran is governed by religiously fanatic mullahs, who do not shrink from bringing any sacrifice, wreaking any destruction, if they believe that it will bring their religion-inspired goals to fruition. The primary targets of that fanatical zeal of the Iranian ayatollahs are the U.S. (the "big Satan") and Israel (the "little Satan"), perceived as being America's agent in the Middle East.

Since Iran is close to possession of long-range missiles, the United States would be in mortal danger of attack by that country. But even short of such attack, Iran, just as Saddam had planned, would be in unquestioned dominance of the Middle East and of its oil supply, the life blood of the Western world. It would cause intolerable damage to life and to the economy of the United States.

But Israel is the most immediate target of Iran's fury. Iran's unquenchable hatred of Israel is totally based on religious rage and on the conviction that "nonbelievers" have no legitimate place in the Middle East. Iran's leaders have publicly threatened Israel with destruction once they come into possession of nuclear weapons.

Horrifying panorama. Israel is such a small country that one or two nuclear weapons strategically placed in its narrow coastal strip would destroy it. Louis René Beres, professor of political science and international law at Purdue University, has described what would happen if and when Iran's mullahs direct their Islamic bombs on Israel. In addition to an immediate death toll in the hundreds of thousands, overwhelming health problems would afflict the survivors. Beyond the immediate burn injuries, Israelis would be crushed by collapsing buildings and torn to shreds by flying glass. Others would fall victim to raging firestorms. Fallout injuries would include whole-body radiation injuries and injuries produced by deposits of radioactive substances within the body. After an Iranian nuclear attack, medical facilities would be taxed beyond capacity. Water supplies would become altogether unusable. Housing and shelter would be unavailable for hundreds of thousands. Transportation and all other communication would break down and food shortages would be critical and long-term.

Normal human society would cease. Many of the survivors could expect an increase in serious degenerative diseases, also premature death, impairment of vision and sterility. A vastly increased incidence of all kinds of cancers would be unavoidable. Many balanced relationships in nature would be destroyed, upset by the extensive fallout. Survivors would have to deal with mushrooming insect hordes that would spread from the radiation-damaged areas in which they arose. This fact, coupled with the prevalence of unburied corpses, uncontrolled waste and untreated sewage, would generate tens of trillions of flies and mosquitoes. Breeding in the dead bodies, these insects would make it impossible to control typhus, malaria, dengue fever and encephalitis. But beyond that, throughout Israel, the largest health threat would be posed by hundreds of thousands of rotting human corpses. The survivors might envy the dead.

The effects of a nuclear attack on Israel are too horrible to consider. Even the description given above cannot begin to do justice to the devastation and to the total destruction that would be wrought. There can be little question that, as its final action as a coherent society, Israel would use its own considerable military might against its tormentors and would convert the entire Middle East into a hell, in which ultimately nothing could survive. It is clear that that has to be prevented at all cost, and that no effort should be spared to keep the hands of the evil ayatollahs off the nuclear trigger. One hopes that it can be done by persuasion and diplomacy. But if it can not, somebody – perhaps the United States or perhaps Israel, with or without the approval of the United States – would have to preempt and, by whatever means, keep Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. It is the most important cause of our time. The survival of the world is at stake.

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Cizik counters that a community of 50 million voters has enough "intelligence" and "human capital" to tackle more than a couple of policy areas at once. As for being undermined by the right, he defiantly points to the NAE's status as the largest organization representing evangelicals. But, in political terms, say folks on Capitol Hill, the NAE's constituency is a different creature than, say, Focus on the Family's. "The NAE was meant to have a top-down infrastructure. It was never meant to be a membership group," says Mark Rodgers, staff director for the Senate Republican Conference. "Its membership is made up of denominations and some individual churches, and its primary form of communication is the church-bulletin insert." By contrast, he notes, "Focus on the Family would have a direct mailing list of millions." So, while it's fair to say that the NAE represents a large constituency, says Rodgers, "They don't have the deliverables"—i.e., the ability to translate the general support of a constituency into tangible political pressure. And without deliverables, such as Dobson's ability to unleash his four million radio listeners on a particular bill or senator, it's hard to hold Congress's gaze for very long.

Recognizing this, both Wallis and Cizik emphasize that they are working on ways to communicate with their constituencies. The NAE is launching a massive education campaign, says Cizik, sending out books and resource guides to congregations and Christian organizations nationwide. Wallis, meanwhile, is exploring ways to launch his own syndicated radio show. But, even assuming such networks take root, it remains to be seen how much success the non-right will have getting voters as worked up about, say, health care as they do about gay marriage. It's not as though no one has tried before. Though less famous than activists on the right, there has long existed a community of Christian leaders preaching social justice. Evangelical political lefties like Ron Sider, head of Evangelicals for Social Action, and Tony Campolo, a professor emeritus of sociology at Eastern University (and one of President Clinton's spiritual advisers), point to Christianity's history of championing social reform (nineteenth-century evangelist William Wilberforce's role in abolishing slavery in England is a favorite example) and frequently stress that the Bible has much more to say about caring for the poor than about eradicating sexual sin.

IN MODERN U.S. politics, however, personal piety has proved the more compelling rallying cry for a variety of reasons—perhaps the most basic being that sex sells. "Sex always gets people's attention," says Marvin Olasky, godfather of compassionate conservatism and editor of the religious magazine *World*. Talk of sexual sin "goes to the gut," agrees conservative columnist Cal Thomas (who, in his younger days, served as vice president of communications for the Moral Majority). "It goes to the emotions, to feelings. It produces a visceral reaction." By contrast, issues like health care and homelessness, while arguably more pertinent to more people's lives, lack the same sizzle and, as such, are unlikely to capture the imagination of the grassroots, not to mention a drama-loving press.

As a bonus, says Thomas, opposing abortion and gay marriage generally has more to do with changing someone else's behavior than one's own. He points out that, as far as the decline of American culture goes, Christians are just as guilty as non-Christians when it comes to high divorce rates, out-of-wedlock sex, and rampant materialism. (Supporting data for this and similar trends can be found in Sider's book *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience*.) But addressing this embarrassing reality would involve too much self-scrutiny, says Thomas. "People would much rather watch a video of someone else exercising than go to the gym and do the sweating themselves," he quips.

Similarly, issues like poverty and racial reconciliation don't lend themselves as neatly to the same good-versus-evil, us-versus-them political paradigm as gay rights or judicial activism, the right's latest bugaboo. Sociologist Tony Campolo (who recently conducted his own spiritual sit-down with Democratic lawmakers) likes to quote from philosopher Eric Hoffer's 1951 book, *True Believer*: "Mass movements can rise and spread without belief in a god, but never without belief in a devil." Hitler had the Jews, and the communists had the capitalists, says Campolo. "I contend that it's easy to rally people around opposition to gay people. In the minds of many, they have become the devil that must be destroyed if America is to be saved."

The uncomplicated, emotionally driven nature of the right's message gives it a fund-raising edge over the non-right. "Big-time TV evangelists tell people, 'Send us your money so we can stop abortion, stop gay rights,'" snorts Thomas. "If they were to go on and talk about how Christians needed to fix what's wrong in their own house, they wouldn't raise a dime." Moreover, if evangelicals seriously began pushing for tougher environmental regulation or higher Social Security taxes, it would strain the base's comfy relationship with the wing of the GOP that cares less about social than economic policy but that has, over the years, proved amenable to helping finance the crusade for personal piety. While many big-money Republicans may not share the right's passion for banning abortion, such a cause doesn't directly conflict with the party's laissez-faire, pro-corporate economic stance. Notably, neither do the foreign policy achievements cited by the NAE, such as legislation involving religious freedom or child sex-trafficking. Mucking around with domestic economic policy, however, such as calling for an increase in the minimum wage or for new pollution-control standards, could provoke intraparty rifts and put Republican politicians in a jam—yet another reason for the right to fight to maintain the status quo.

ON A MORE spiritual plane, the non-right also has the theological tradition of American evangelicalism to contend with. To hear Wallis or Campolo talk, one might assume the religious

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right's broad-based conservative politics were forged by Falwell, Robertson, and Paul Weyrich sometime in the 1970s. ("Deals were cut," says Wallis conspiratorially. "Robertson and Falwell were told, 'Give us your mailing lists and we'll make you household names.'") For certain issues, this may be true: Without question, the cultural upheaval of the 1960s—particularly the sexual revolution—sent social conservatives reeling with its celebration of what they still deride as an "if it feels good, do it" mentality that threatens the very foundation of our society. Civil rights clashes, meanwhile, fed Southern conservatives' sense that Big Government was not on their side. But much of the link between conservative theology and conservative politics in American evangelicalism stretches back considerably further, to a religious split that occurred in the early 1900s and sparked what is often referred to as "the great reversal" (so dubbed because, prior to the rift, conservative evangelicals were often active in progressive social causes). As historian George Marsden relates in *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, the progressive politics of the Roosevelt era (Teddy, not Franklin) "fostered a new wave of social concern in the churches and new types of proposals for social reform." Increasingly, progressive-minded Christians began insisting that believers should focus less on saving people's souls for the next world and more on redressing social ills in this one, a message referred to as "the social gospel." More theologically conservative Christians grew increasingly upset at what they saw as an attempt to supplant the message of salvation through Jesus's divine grace with a message of salvation through good works. They, in turn, responded by championing personal redemption and individual holiness over what famed revivalist Billy Sunday denounced as "this godless social-service nonsense." The polarization intensified such that, by the 1920s, the social gospel, with its link to progressive political ideals, came to be widely associated with, if not secularism, at least a nonevangelical brand of Protestantism more in keeping with today's liberal mainline churches than with evangelicals.

A century later, American evangelicalism's emphasis on free-will individualism, personal responsibility, and the paramount importance of one's personal walk with God predisposes many adherents to distrust government intervention in social problems like poverty. In researching their book, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*, Michael Emerson and Christian Smith found that evangelicals are more inclined than nonevangelicals to blame an individual's failure to thrive on personal shortcomings—say, a lack of ambition or character—rather than on any systemic disadvantages. By extension, write the authors, "Because systems and programs are viewed as obviating personal responsibility and not changing the hearts of individuals, they are ultimately destructive." Thus, "Welfare is seen as both terribly misguided and sinful, running counter to most things American and, in their understanding, most things Christian. It is far better, according to this [representative interviewee], to 'give them the basics of God and teach them about Jesus. That's going to bring them a whole lot more out of poverty than it is to give them a welfare check.'" Or, as Bush is so fond of asserting, the best way to tackle social problems is by changing "one heart and one soul at a time."

THEOLOGY ASIDE, THE political diversity of the religious non-right is likely to work against it as well. Wallis, for instance, opposed both the 1996 Welfare Reform Act and the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, two positions that separate him from the bulk of the NAE's constituency. So, while the various groups may espouse similar broad principles, achieving any sort of consensus on what policies to push could prove nearly impossible. For all of Cizik's excitement over the "Call to Civic Responsibility," the document is intentionally devoid of policy positions. And, while it's nice of the evangelical community to express its theological opposition to poverty, such declarations don't do much to spur political action. (Remember: It's all about the deliverables.)

Indeed, there's some question even about how closely the various elements of the non-right would be willing to coordinate any activism. While he and Wallis have a history of signing one another's position statements, Cizik nonetheless expresses reservations about joining forces with "traditional evangelical liberals." Clearly, his cause would be ill-served if conservative colleagues wrote the NAE off, as they have Wallis, as part of the religious left. And Cizik already has grave doubts about Wallis's grassroots support and political effectiveness: "I would ask Jim—who's a friend—'Passed any bills lately? Have you succeeded with anything on the macro level?'" In contrast to the politically formidable coherence of the right, segments of the non-right could find themselves working at cross-purposes, struggling to organize parallel movements around conflicting proposals for a single issue.

But such devilish details are for another day. For now, the religious non-right is relishing its higher profile and dreaming of a not-so-distant future in which its leaders are as well-known and politically potent as the Ralph Reeds and James Dobsons of the right. The enthusiasm is particularly palpable in the scuffed, high-ceilinged halls of *Sojourners*, where Wallis's bright-eyed revolutionaries dash about making copies, answering phones, and organizing e-mail lists. Everyone looks purposeful, upbeat, and touchingly young, like student organizers of some generic campus sit-in. A twentysomething staffer sporting dark sunglasses, flip-flops, and a confident grin strides loosely through the building's front doors, headed for another day in the trenches. Watching him, one can almost picture a young Wallis, burning with the optimism and conviction that he and his pals stand poised to transform the face of U.S. policy and evangelicalism. But, 30 years later, for all of the recent buzz, the political landscape doesn't look that much more promising. No wonder Wallis seems so tired. ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Assorted Crimes

A DOCUMENTARY CALLED **ENRON: THE SMARTEST GUYS IN THE ROOM** is about more than its immediate subject. Alex Gibney, who directed, based his screenplay on a book by Bethany McLean and Peter Elkind, *Fortune* reporters. (It was McLean who first uncovered the Enron mess.) What Gibney has done, with sharp interviews, with some of Enron's own company footage, with television clips, and with insistent pace, is to fashion a film missile that pierces the façade of some American practices. Behind that front looms a large and ominous motif.

ENRON: THE SMARTEST GUYS IN THE ROOM
(Magnolia)

THE INTERPRETER
(Universal)

The details of the charges against Enron do not need to be chronicled here. In sum, the company's executives apparently lied and swindled. The charges: Enron, a huge energy provider, reported profits when there weren't any; and the executives exercised their stock options at a good price when they presumably knew that the stock was going to collapse. These men, who were already wildly rich when they allegedly began this operation, were undeterred by the fact that they would be stealing from people whom they had persuaded to invest in their company. And the danger that their employees would lose their jobs and their pensions if the frauds were found out also meant nothing to them. What *did* mean something to them? Greed is too simple an answer. A man with hundreds of millions who steals more hundreds of millions is not simply greedy; he seems to me aloft in a rarefied atmosphere where he feels quasi-divine, omnipotent. The cries of wounded mortals down below become a kind of flattery.

It is part of the motif that these men talk and josh like good guys. While all the above was apparently going on, Kenneth Lay, the chairman of Enron (and a Texan friend of both George Bushes), addressed his employees in the company's auditorium with a you-and-I-are-regular-fellows smirk. He and Jeffrey Skilling—another top Enron executive, another fount of aplomb—have yet to be tried. But whatever happens to them in court—even if they are fined the amounts that they are said to have stolen, even if they serve prison sentences—how will it help the twenty thousand former Enron employees now out of work and without pensions? Oh, of course, Lay and Skilling will say that they are sorry.

But, again, Gibney's film is more than an indictment of Enron leaders. This case is simply at the moment the most vivid instance of something old and coiled in America. Look at a few other recent and current cases. Arthur Andersen, the immense accounting firm, was convicted of shredding Enron documents, and the company was consequently shattered. (Andersen once had twenty-eight thousand employees; it now has two hundred, whose job is to close down the business.) Tyco International, a conglomerate, has two executives who are now being tried on charges of forgiving millions in company loans to themselves and selling $575 million of Tyco stock, the price of which they kept artificially inflated. The CEO of HealthSouth Corporation, which handles medical matters in many places besides the South, is now on trial for fraud involving many millions. What all these sorry stories certify is that money, especially in alpine sums, is the greatest addictive drug. It provides the highest high, and it doesn't necessarily affect demeanor or social standing. In fact, the most chilling and frightening shots in Gibney's film are the close-ups of the urbane Lay and Skilling. (The one grossly mistaken shot is the opposite of urbane—the re-enactment of an Enron executive's suicide.)

Even before seeing this film, I had, like most others, been oppressed by the flood of fakeries that shivered this country. I wasn't unduly naïve about fraud. My earliest newspaper reading included accounts of the Teapot Dome scandal in 1923; and fraud can hardly be called an American monopoly. (Just for two instances, remember the South Sea Bubble and Stavisky.) But the film reminded me of a tectonic flaw in this country that was perceived by Melville a century and a half ago. His novel *The Confidence-Man* is about a man who adopts various guises on a Mississippi steamer—an abstract of America entire—and swindles fellow passengers. R. W. B. Lewis wrote that "the Confidence Man is to some extent Melville's American embodiment of one of the most engaging of the great archetypal figures—the trickster god.... He was, to use modern terms, the god of gambling, and the deity of financial profit, the one involved in commercial dealings—particularly in shady ones...."

When Melville saw this "American embodiment," he saw too that its medium was the creation of confidence. The steamer on which the swindles take place is called the *Fidèle*. Gibney's well-knit, generally lucid documentary is about one more voyage on the *Fidèle*.

The screenplay of **THE INTERPRETER**, assembled by a platoon of writers, is one of the breed that seem to disclose their assemblage as they go. First, someone suggested a thriller about a U.N. interpreter. Great! A woman. Greater! Now make her a translator of an obscure language. (The credits tell us that this language, an African dialect called Ku, was invented for the film.) This will explain why she was hired by the U.N. despite her flaky political background. Now for a threat. The president of the (fictitious) African country that speaks Ku is coming to address the General Assembly, and the Ku expert overhears some talk about assassinating him. Hey, now we can whip in a U.S. Secret Service agent—an attractive gent, of course. Links between the interpreter and the agent can develop against

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a background of official procedures and an exploration of the U.N. building. But how about character depths for the two leads? Well, let's give the woman a brother who is involved in the African troubles; and the agent gets a wife who ran away from him and was killed as she was on her way back to him—two weeks ago. Just in time to be of use to the screenwriters.

Onward. Hustle and threat and (incidental) killing can fill up the time until the African president arrives, throughout which there can be a contrast between the slipperiness of the plot and the solidity of the U.N. building where much of it takes place. (Darius Khondji's camera rendition of the building is impressive.) Then the president arrives, and—never mind the fact that the scene is a reminder of *The Parallax View*—the main trouble erupts. The interpreter can then behave in a way that is only sketchily related to the character we have seen, and it doesn't matter if the agent is reduced to relative inaction.

The director, Sydney Pollack, who appears briefly in the film, has done his experienced best with this Scotch-taped script. But his two stars are insuperable handicaps. Nicole Kidman, as the Ku lady, continues to float on the thinness of person and performance that apparently enraptures millions. Sean Penn, as the agent, shows that though he has some force in roles of stress and strain, he flounders when called on for romance. He has no charm. The last scene between the two stars, meant to tug our hearts, merely delays the finish.

This is the first film that the U.N. has permitted to be shot in its building. Better luck next time, U.N. ■

ROBERT BRUSTEIN ON THEATER

Prosecution Plays

CONTRARY TO RECEIVED opinion, the American theater is currently hosting as many good playwrights, and as many strong plays, as ever before. Although virtually none of these dramas originates on Broadway, a handful eventually enter the mainstream through the channels of resident, Off-Broadway, and London theaters. What follows is a brief roundup of six new works, submitted with my apologies. Not all of them are noteworthy, but most deserve more attention than I can provide here. To generalize about the direction of recent drama from these examples, it seems to be informed by an interrogatory spirit and a courtroom style: by some curious coincidence, four of these plays are driven by prosecutions.

DOUBT
(Walter Kerr Theatre)

ROMANCE
(Atlantic Theater Company)

THE LAST DAYS OF JUDAS ISCARIOT
(LAByrinth Theater)

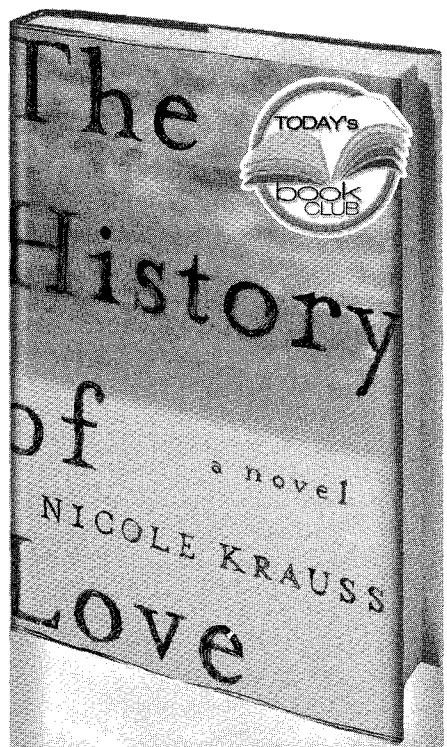
THE PILLOWMAN
(Booth Theater)

THOM PAIN (BASED ON NOTHING)
(DR2 Theatre)

THE LIGHT IN THE PIAZZA
(Vivian Beaumont Theater)

After a long career of journeyman writing for the stage (*Danny and the Deep Blue Sea*, *Dirty Story*) and screen (*Moonstruck*, *Joe Versus the Volcano*), John Patrick Shanley has finally caught the larger public's attention with **DOUBT**. The play has already won a Pulitzer Prize and the Outer Critics Circle Award, and will be a strong contender for the Tony as well. While Shanley's style remains relatively conventional, it is his considerable achievement to have taken a subject about which everyone has formed an opinion—sexual abuse among the Catholic clergy—and dramatized it without prejudice or preconception. Something has transpired between Father Flynn (Brian F. O'Byrne) and a young student at St. Nicholas School that Sister Aloysius (Cherry Jones) firmly believes to have been transgressive. In her remorseless prosecution of the case and interrogation of the priest, she systematically destroys his reputation, not to mention his love of teaching and perhaps of the church. By the end—too late—she is finally developing some incertitude.

"Ingenious."*



"Vertiginously exciting . . . [a] vibrantly imagined world . . . illuminated by the warmth and delicacy of [Krauss's] prose . . . a prodigious talent."
—JANET MASLIN, *New York Times**

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—ELIZABETH SCHMIDT, *Vogue*

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—HARLAN COBEN, selecting *The History of Love* for the Today Show book club

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Shanley may leave the audience in doubt about the guilt of Father Flynn, but there can be no doubt about the power of the production's big theatrical performances, directed with precision and confidence by Doug Hughes. O'Byrne's warm interpretation of the harried priest is in impressive contrast to the cold serial killer he played in *Frozen*, and Jones gives the performance of her life as the tightly wimpled female Javert who pursues him.

This is the strongest play about the Catholic clergy since Christopher Durang's *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All to You*, which also featured a splendid characterization (by Elizabeth Franz) of a less-than-charitable nun. Shanley's appreciation of "negative capability"—Keats defined it as the capacity to remain in "uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason"—may sometimes be expressed a bit too positively and unambiguously, but the play is a significant advance for him and for the Manhattan Theatre Club, which produced it.

Romance is David Mamet's latest departure from the staccato realism for which he became famous, an older style currently on display in the Broadway revival of *Glengarry Glen Ross*. Instead, *Romance* is a legal farce in the tradition of the Marx Brothers. (*A Day in the Courthouse*? *A Night in the Pokey*?) Appearing before an exasperated and slightly loony pill-popping judge—a character inspired, I would guess, by Liam Dunn's frazzled magistrate in the movie *What's Up, Doc?*—a Jewish chiropractor named George Bernstein has been indicted for an unspecified crime. He is being defended by a Gentile lawyer ("It's like going to a straight hairdresser") and questioned by a gay prosecutor. With everyone in a continuous state of fury, the subsequent exchanges produce some of the most ferocious, most unbuttoned, most politically incorrect racial and religious slurs in recent drama, delivered while the bailiff doggedly tries to take orders for lunch. (Jewish defendant: "You brain-dead white socks, country club, plaid pants, Campbell's soup fucken shaygetz Goy ... with your wives named Marge"; Gentile defense attorney: "You rug merchant, greasy, hook-nosed, no-dick, Christ-killing son of a bitch.... You people can't order a cheese sandwich ... without mentioning the Holocaust"). Even the judge is anti-Semitic, until he confesses that he's a "sheeny" too, with a secretly Jewish father.

All this takes place against the background of a peace conference between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The court proceedings come to a halt when the chiropractor announces he has discovered a way to bring peace to the Middle East (by re-aligning the subdural areas on the necks of the Israeli and Palestinian leaders). The farce goes on a bit too long, and it wanders off track when the prosecutor's boyfriend enters the court to discover that the Jewish defendant is a long-lost lover. But *Romance* is never less than an engaging *jeu d'esprit*, directed in lively Mamet style by Neil Pepe, and acted with alacrity and relish by a spirited cast.

The Last Days of Judas Iscariot is another courtroom vaudeville, this one by Stephen Adley Guirgis. This report is based on the highly readable script, since the production closed before I was able to see it. But I think the play confirms Guirgis's place as one of our most electric young dramatists. After watching this playwright's *Our Lady of 121st Street*, I suggested he might be an heir to O'Neill. His Judas play reveals he has a much sharper sense of humor. As in *Romance*, the courtroom scenes feature an angry judge out of movie farces ("When I come to court dressed as Ethel Merman in a one-piece bathing suit," he barks, "that'll be my signal to you that I want your opinion"), while most of the other characters speak in the street language of urban blacks and homeless derelicts.

Guirgis is quite familiar with both Testaments of the Bible, and while the defense attorney is a winged female philosopher and the prosecutor a Muslim who fawns on the judge while thirsting for the blood of the defendant, the witnesses for and against Judas include figures from the Gospels—Satan, Mary Magdalene, Pontius Pilate, Caiaphas, and Saint Thomas—not to mention Freud, Mother Teresa, and Saint Monica (the mother of Augustine, and the namesake of a Hollywood suburb). The play does not exonerate Judas so much as humanize him, and in the end he is embraced by Jesus, who washes his feet and begs him for love. Judas cannot give it. The climax is unsatisfactory, but how do you conclude such an enterprise? Merely to undertake it is an act of considerable courage and audacity—and slapstick skill.

The Pillowman is the last in the string of prosecution plays, and a major departure for Martin McDonagh. Set in the interrogation rooms of a prison in an unidentified totalitarian state, it does not rely, like the playwright's two previous Irish trilogies, on local color or provincial Irish speech. Though hardly perfect in form, *The Pillowman* represents a real growth spurt for this extraordinary dramatist, an exponential leap in his imaginative powers.

Much of the work is (perhaps by design) extremely derivative. It starts off in a Kafkaesque manner, reinforced by similarities to Pinter's *The Birthday Party*, Havel's *Interview*, and Beckett's *Catastrophe*. A writer of mostly unpublished stories is being questioned by a volatile cop named Ariel (Željko Ivanek) and a self-possessed detective named Tupolski (Jeff Goldblum) concerning a crime whose nature is not at first entirely clear. The name of the writer (played by Billy Crudup) is Katurian Katurian Katurian, familiarly known as Katurian, and before long Ariel has stuck a pen in his ear as a prelude to further torture. Katurian's brain-damaged brother Michal (Michael Stuhlbarg) is in another room, ostensibly being tortured as well. And as the plot develops, we learn that Katurian's stories about the murder and mutilation of little children have been acted out in reality, unbeknown to him, by his next of kin.

Brothers figure as prominently in McDonagh's plays as in Sam Shepard's. But the relationship between Katurian and Michal ("Tell us a story, Katurian") is almost identical to the bond between George and the feebleminded Lennie in *Of Mice and Men* ("Tell me about ... the rabbits"). And when Katurian learns that Michal has murdered three children in the identical manner as his stories describe, he treats his brother the same way George treated Lennie after he killed Curley's wife: he ends his life as an act of mercy.

That event concludes the first act, and at the blackout I thought it should have ended the play. But it is in the second act that McDonagh's real, and less derivative, theme emerges: whether violent art stimulates violent behavior. This issue has been debated endlessly by sociologists, psychologists, legal theorists, and philosophers (starting with Aristotle's theory of catharsis), but never, to my knowledge, has it been treated so well by a dramatist. In Katurian's case, we learn that the reverse is true: his

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parents' vicious treatment of his brother has inspired his grotesque stories, which in turn have influenced his brother's crimes. As it turns out, Katurian, with his own history of violence, accepts his execution, caring a lot less about his own survival than about the survival of his writing, regardless of its effect on others. And the ending, oddly triumphant for such a "downbeat" story, re-affirms the stubborn will of the creative spirit.

The production has been staged in high Grand Guignol style by John Crowley, featuring startling Victorian tableaux of Katurian's childhood in upstage scenic boxes. Crowley has also elicited superb performances from his cast—particularly Goldblum, who has shed his familiar mannerisms to gain a very funny, soothing sangfroid and minimalist menace, and Ivanek, whose explosive sadistic exterior conceals a basically decent and fair-minded individual. Crudup, though perhaps a bit too clean-cut for the role, is a passionate Katurian, and Stuhlbarg, a shambling wreck of an overweight half-wit with a gray spot in his hair like a stigma, both charms and repels as Michal.

The last two works under review are not prosecution plays except in the sense that they invite prosecution—one for affectation in the third degree, the other for a failure of imagination. **Thom Pain (Based on Nothing)**, an "existential stand-up" by Will Eno, irritated me with its pretentious prolix prattle. The content of this monologue, as intoned by James Urbaniak, is accurately summed up in the parenthetical subtitle. As Lear once reminded us, nothing will come of nothing. As for Eno's titular pun on the author of *Common Sense*, it is fairly typical of the playwright's wit, and bears as much relevance to the proceedings as Ionesco's Bald Soprano, who, when mentioned, causes acute embarrassment.

I was less embarrassed than wearied by this stream-of-consciousness palaver that boasts of putting us "face to face with the modern mind." (Gee, I haven't been face-to-face with a modern mind since *The Brain That Wouldn't Die*.) The playwright's other profound reflections are delivered in telegraphic style, alternately cajoling and insulting the audience, at the same time that he is bestowing his ineffable wisdom on us. "We're on planet Earth, a planet in a solar system, one of a trillion solar systems in our galaxy, which is one of a billion galaxies in the Universe. And you think you're pretty special. Math. There's a lot of zeroes out there," etc. If you can endure this kind of bloat for more than five minutes without your eyes crossing, I'll be happy to buy you two tickets to Will Eno's next work.

The Light in the Piazza is based on a novel by Elizabeth Spencer that seemed dated when it was adapted into a movie forty years ago starring Olivia de Havilland, Yvette Mimieux, and Rossano Brazzi. It was one of those Hollywood anecdotes (another was *A Little Romance* with Laurence Olivier and Diane Lane) inspired by the contrasts in Henry James and others between American innocence and European cosmopolitanism, a theme not exactly pulsing with originality, or even accuracy, today.

Craig Lucas, who adapted the book for the musical, is a fine playwright who ought to be more careful about the commissions he accepts, while Adam Guettel, who wrote the music and lyrics, is a gifted Sondheim-influenced composer who should stop stifling his talent for melodic line. As for the plot, it is un-

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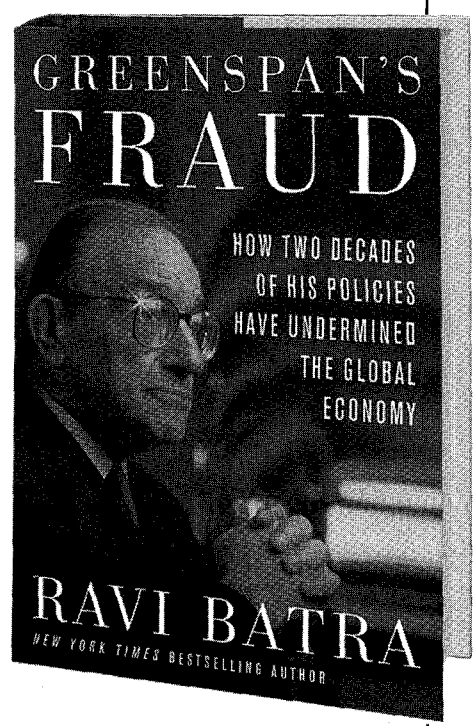
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raveled very very slowly under Bartlett Sher's deliberate direction, accompanied by frequent changes of Michael Yeargan's architectural settings and Catherine Zuber's sumptuous costumes. It is also rather preposterous. Margaret, a Southern matron (played by Victoria Clark as an alternately forbidding and compassionate soprano), and her daughter Clara (a fresh ingenue turn by Kelli O'Hara) have come to Florence on holiday. A young Italian named Fabrizio (the very engaging Matthew Morrison) falls in love with Clara at first sight, and after fumbling past a lot of language barriers, the couple plan to get married.

The hidden obstacle on the path of true love is that when Clara was a young girl, she got kicked in the head by a pony. As a result, she is now intellectually and emotionally retarded, although only her parents seem to recognize this. The audience is admitted to the secret through small bursts of plot, such as when she strokes the penis of a nude statue or throws wine on the dress of her future sister-in-law after the woman has kissed her fiancé on his lips. Apart from these relatively insignificant lapses, Clara behaves no more strangely than any other glandular American girl, so the apprehension expressed by her irate father and anxious mother seems entirely misplaced, if not bewildering. As for Fabrizio's father, his only concern is about Clara's age—the match is almost called off when he discovers that she is six years older than his son. By show's end, Fabrizio and Clara join hands in marriage, and love is permitted to conquer all mental handicaps. But whether Clara will ever display any real signs of her condition remains shrouded in mystery. The greater mystery is why the Beaumont has expended such extravagant resources on such old-fashioned material.

The prosecution rests. Does the defense wish to cross-examine? ■

Ernest R. May

When Government Writes History

A memoir of the 9/11 Commission.

THE 9/11 COMMISSION WAS "set up to fail." So says its chairman, former Republican Governor of New Jersey Thomas Kean. "If you want something to fail," he explains, "you take a controversial topic and appoint five people from each party. You make sure they are appointed by the most partisan people from each party—the leaders of the party. And, just to be sure, let's ask the commission to finish the report during the most partisan period of time—the presidential election season." He could have added that President Bush and Republican leaders in Congress had agreed to create the commission only under unrelenting pressure from the families of the victims, and also that Congress had given it a meager budget and a requirement to get all its work done in a scant eighteen months. He could have added, too, that he was the president's second choice as chairman, Henry Kissinger having stepped down after sixteen days because of the demand by the families that he disclose the names of clients of his consulting firm, and that Kean started under the handicap of never having worked in Washington. It was to be mid-March 2003 before he even had the security clearances needed to read pre–September 11 intelligence reports.

As late as December 2003, with the deadline for the commission's final report only five months away, pundits were debating whether it would even get its Warholian fifteen minutes of fame. But things worked out very differently. The commission's hearings provided headline news from January to June. When it issued its final report in July (having wrested a two-month extension from a resistant Bush and an even more resistant Dennis Hastert), the front page bore the signatures of all ten commissioners. Not one, Republican or Democrat, dissented from a single word in the report's 567 pages. *Newsday* typified media commentary when it called this election-year bipartisanship "miraculous." Equally surprising was the fact that Congress stayed in session to debate the commission's recommendations and that, in December, many of those recommendations became law.

Preceding the report's two chapters of recommendations are eleven chapters on the history of September 11. THE NEW REPUBLIC described these chapters as "novelistically intense." *Time* said they held "one of the most riveting, disturbing and revealing accounts of crime, espionage and the inner workings of government ever written." And John Updike commented in *The New Yorker* that the King James Bible was "our language's lone masterpiece produced by committee, at least until this year's 9/11 Commission Report." It was even nominated for the National Book Award. Clearly something extraordinary had taken place.

The overall success of the commission was the result of many factors. Insistent, emotional, but hardheaded lobbying by the families was critical. So was the calm, undeviatingly bipartisan leadership of Kean and his vice chair, Lee Hamilton; the dedication of the other eight commissioners; and the skillful management by the commission's "front office"—executive director Philip Zelikow; his deputy, Christopher Kojm; and general counsel Daniel Marcus. As the commission's senior adviser, I was a fourth member of this "front office," but I had no managerial responsibility. My job was to help produce the historical narrative.

For this task, I had two comparative advantages. The first was a long career as a historian. The second was a lack of partisan bias. Many years earlier, I had been a commissioner myself. The commission was to recommend laws making presidential papers public property. (From Washington's time to Nixon's, they had been private property.) The statute required that one commissioner

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be a Republican, one a Democrat, and one nonpartisan. I was the last, and was so certified by a 100–0 vote in the Senate. For commissioners and staff who suspected that some part of the 9/11 report might get a political or ideological slant, my OK seemed to be something like a Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval. What follows is my own brief and blinkered account of how that narrative came into being.

In January 2003, Zelikow phoned me at home in Cambridge, Massachusetts to say that Hamilton had approached him about becoming executive director, and that he wanted to discuss the pros and cons. Zelikow had been a trial lawyer in Texas, a fast-track foreign service officer, a faculty member at Harvard, and then a professor of history at the University of Virginia. He had served on the National Security Council staff with Condoleezza Rice, at that time Bush's national security adviser, and he and Rice had coauthored a scholarly book on the post–Cold War unification of Germany. At Harvard, Zelikow and I and the late Richard Neustadt had taught courses together. He and I had collaborated on a number of projects, among them the book *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis*, which became the basis for the movie *Thirteen Days*.

On that January evening, we talked on the phone for more than an hour. We agreed that prospects for the 9/11 Commission were anything but bright. But we also agreed that a thorough government inquiry was urgently important. September 11, 2001 was a watershed moment, on a par at least with Pearl Harbor. We discussed the three investigations of Pearl Harbor, all of which had focused on blaming Americans, and had left the Japanese role to be reconstructed by scholars years later. Since the commission's charter called for it to investigate all "facts and circumstances relating to the terrorist attacks" and gave it subpoena powers, and since many leaders in Al Qaeda, the Islamist terrorist network behind the sinister plot, had been captured in Afghanistan or elsewhere, along with hard disks and other files, here was an opportunity to try to tell the whole story from both sides.

Typically, government reports focus on "findings" and array the evidence accordingly. None, to our knowledge, had ever attempted simply to produce professional-quality narrative history. None, certainly, had been conceived as international history, not just American history. None had aspired to deal not only with the immediate past but also with the long background that would be needed if, as we said to each other, the report was to remain the reference volume on September 11 sitting on the shelves of high school and college teachers a generation hence.

Zelikow subsequently spoke with Kean. He reported back that Kean saw the opportunity exactly as we did. A Hudson Valley aristocrat who graduated from Princeton, Kean taught for three years at his Massachusetts prep school, St. Mark's, and then studied for a doctorate at Columbia, working with Richard Hofstadter and our later colleague Neustadt. Zelikow found that Kean already had in mind a concept much like ours. Kean would later say that "we want a report that our grandchildren can take off the shelf in fifty years and say, 'This is what happened.' "

Lee Hamilton had no difficulty accepting this ambitious concept. He always attached more importance to the commission's recommendations than to its report. Based on his long experience, he predicted that members of Congress and officials would read only an executive summary. Still, he saw at once that couching the report as a history might at least delay a partisan split within the commission, for the commissioners could begin by debating the facts of the story rather than their conclusions or their recommendations.

After Zelikow agreed to become executive director and I signed on as a consultant, he and I worked up an outline for a sixteen-chapter report. By the middle of March 2003, the outline had chapter headings, subheadings, and sub-subheadings. We discussed this outline with Kean and then with Hamilton and Kojm (who had been Hamilton's assistant on Capitol Hill and was his alter ego within the commission). They all approved, but agreed that for the moment it should be shared with no one else except Marcus. We said to one another that for the time being the outline should be treated as if it were the most highly classified document the commission possessed, for premature debate about the shape of the report could easily dissolve into a partisan wrangle.

The final report differed from the original outline in three major respects. The outline had called for starting with the rise of Al Qaeda, perhaps even beginning with the birth of Islam, then moving through the story chronologically. Late in the process of drafting, Democratic commissioner Tim Roemer (like Hamilton, a former congressman from Indiana) recommended that the opening chapter instead tell what happened on September 11, expanding the outline's notion of handling this in a prologue. Fred Fielding, a Republican commissioner who had been White House counsel under Presidents Nixon and Reagan, seconded Roemer's proposal. All the other commissioners quickly agreed. It was an inspired suggestion that added to the narrative power of the report.

Another change was in the report's ending. The outline had called for six short chapters offering recommendations grouped under, for example, "intelligence," "national defense," and "homeland security." In the end, the commissioners decided to fold all their recommendations into two chapters, one on future counterterrorist strategy, the other on how to organize the government to pursue that strategy.

The only other major change was the addition of a chapter dealing with intelligence warnings in the summer of 2001. We had intended this to be a section within one of two chapters on American counterterrorism policy. The staff members working on the subject resisted trimming away details of these warnings. They were right. The public needed to be told about every warning that Al Qaeda might attack inside the United States. At the same time, the public needed to see that these warnings had been blips on a screen teeming with warnings of possible attacks outside the United States.

To some extent, the concept of the report as a narrative history influenced the recruitment of staff. There were many other constraints. The urgent reporting deadline made it advantageous if a potential member of the staff already had high-level security clearances. (Zelikow had them as a member of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. I had them as a member of the Intelligence Science Board.) That meant preference for people who could be detailed from national security agencies or who had

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been on the staff of one of the congressional intelligence oversight committees. Of the fifty-odd men and women who counted as professional rather than administrative staff, at least half had such backgrounds. For the most part, these government veterans tended to assume that the commission would produce a report of the traditional type. They had to be educated to the idea of writing a narrative.

We were fortunate that the idea appealed immediately to several key staff members. In the very early period, before Hamilton persuaded the CIA to lend the commission a secure facility in downtown Washington, the commission's only headquarters was Zelikow's hotel room. From there, he and I telephoned Douglas MacEachin at his retirement home in France. A onetime Marine who had become an intelligence analyst, MacEachin had ended up as head of the CIA's Directorate of Intelligence. After his retirement in the mid-1990s, he had been a research associate at Harvard, working with Zelikow and me and producing several exquisite monographs on intelligence history. When MacEachin agreed to join us, the commission had a ten-strike, for he combined a historian's instincts with unlimited energy, an ability to inspire teamwork, and, no less important, a wide acquaintance within the intelligence community—something that, in terms of access to documents and to witnesses, proved an invaluable complement to the formal authority of the commission.

Working with Kean, Hamilton, Kojm, Marcus, and others, Zelikow recruited others qualified to work on the kind of report we had envisioned. Michael Hurley was a career officer in the CIA's Directorate of Operations, but he also had a law degree and happened to be an avid reader of history. Having represented the CIA on the National Security Council staff, he, too, brought to the commission a useful personal network. Another catch—to mention only one of several—was Lloyd Salvetti, another CIA operations officer. His last post had been as head of the CIA's internal think tank, the Center for the Study of Intelligence. There, he had worked closely with Zelikow and me on a Harvard executive program for senior intelligence analysts, part of which had involved developing historical case studies for classroom use. Yet another—to mention only one more—was former New Jersey attorney general John Farmer, recruited by Kean.

ZELIKOW AND I WERE THE architects of the report, but it had many, many authors. With Kojm and Marcus, we acted as general editors. The four of us helped to give the report its style and, above all, to keep it a narrative accessible now and a generation from now. Its first eleven chapters would not tell such a riveting story if the commissioners and the staff had not accepted and internalized the idea of the report's being an enduringly readable history. And no language appeared anywhere in the final text unless Zelikow or I or both of us—and all the commissioners—had accepted it.

With agreement from the commissioners and his colleagues in the front office, Zelikow divided the staff into teams, more or less coinciding with topics in the outline. MacEachin headed one studying Al Qaeda. In time, this team split in two, with Dietrich Snell captaining a group that worked specifically on the 9/11 plot and the movements of the hijackers. Though a lawyer through and through, Snell had prosecuted terrorists in New York, was fascinated by the terrible story, and proved to be both a natural-born historian and a gifted writer. Hurley led the team that focused on U.S. counterterrorism activity prior to September 11.

MacEachin's, Snell's, and Hurley's teams found offices in the premises that Hamilton had obtained from the CIA. So did a team that concentrated on the intelligence community, as well as parts of a team that dealt with terrorist finance. This Special Compartmented Information Facility (SCIF, pronounced "skiff"), essentially one large safe, housed also the front office and the commission's sensitive files. It had the commission's principal conference room. Other staff in Washington and New York worked on topics such as emergency response on September 11, which required less access to highly classified material, but the SCIF was where the commission met and where all drafts for the final report ended up.

Zelikow asked all the teams to start preparing timelines and monographs for their subjects. For some, this was the first hint that they might not be writing a conventional government report—that they would be writing history. MacEachin set the example, turning out a rolling chronology into which he fitted every new scrap of information. Nearly all members of the staff accommodated to this way of sorting evidence—and this way of thinking about it. In the late spring of 2003, when the outline was finally unveiled before all the commissioners, it appeared to have won acceptance among the staff. The commission endorsed it almost without debate.

THE RESEARCH EFFORT BEHIND the report involved the examination of approximately two and a half million documents and interviews with more than twelve hundred witnesses. Needless to say, problems arose. Subpoenas had to be handed to the Federal Aviation Administration and the North American Air Defense Command because of their slowness in producing material requested by the commission. On the whole, negotiations by Kean, Hamilton, and Zelikow made it possible for the commission's researchers to lay hands on all the documents they wished to see.

The news media gave play to a dispute about access to the President's Daily Brief, a closely held document brought to the White House every morning from the CIA. The White House at first refused any access. Eventually it compromised. Zelikow, a Republican, and Jamie Gorelick, a Democratic commissioner who had been deputy attorney general under Clinton, were allowed to see the full run of PDBs. Kean and Hamilton would look at those identified as bearing directly on September 11 (though they eventually reviewed them all, too).

In fact, the White House was much more helpful to the commission than the media perceived. Select members of the staff had access to the Senior Executive Intelligence Brief (SEIB, or "seeb"), a parallel daily summary of CIA reportage, which was more widely distributed because it was usually not so precise in identifying sources or methods. Also, the commissioners and a few of the rest of us were allowed to see all records of the National Security Council staff bearing on counterterrorism policy. Since the lawyers at the White House feared compromising executive privilege, our notes required special handling: they were not to be copied, and had to be returned before the commission turned its files over to the National Archives. But, so far as I could tell, we were allowed to see every document the White House staff could turn up.

A reader of the commission report should bear in mind that its documentary base was extraordinarily deep but

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also extraordinarily narrow. The documents were necessarily only those relating to terrorism and counterterrorism. They gave few glimmerings of what else had been on the active agenda of the White House and executive departments. We were aware of this limitation. The extent to which the commission's report would have been skewed if it had relied only on documentary evidence can be suggested by two examples—the National Security Council and the Department of Defense.

What we read in National Security Council files told us chiefly about the work of Richard Clarke, the staff member concentrating on terrorism. We saw hardly a single piece of paper reporting what was being done or said by others on the staff, or what other items had been on the agenda of the national security adviser or the president. A story written solely from this documentary record would have centered on Clarke even more than does his own memoir.

The documentary base for our narrative was equally skewed in the Pentagon. We saw records from the office of the assistant secretary of defense for special operations and low intensity conflict (SOLIC, or "so-lick"). That office dealt with terrorism. Its records told about counterterrorist planning by the military as well as by civilians. But the SOLIC records said little about other concerns, and it gave no clues as to how terrorism had ranked among those concerns.

We overcame these limitations by means of interviews and testimony. Only a small part of the testimony came in public hearings. The commission included skilled trial lawyers. One on the Republican side was Slade Gorton, a former senator from the state of Washington now practicing in Seattle. Another was former Illinois governor James Thompson. On the Democratic side were Gorelick and Richard Ben-Veniste, onetime chief of the Watergate Task Force. Their questioning sometimes caused witnesses to say more than they had said in private. Most of the testimony, however, was given behind closed doors, with the record classified and with, as a rule, not more than one or two commissioners present at any one time. (They had day jobs, as did I.) Some sessions were long. Richard Clarke's ran for three days, George Tenet's for two days. While many of our questions arose out of documents and focused directly on terrorism, we also tried to ask about contexts.

It seemed significant sometimes if an individual had no recollection at all of a document or meeting. We had seen, for example, an elaborate plan called "Plan Delenda" that was developed by Clarke in 1998. (As our staff statement explained, "the term 'Delenda' is from the Latin 'to destroy,' evoking the famous Roman vow to erase rival Carthage.") It outlined a program of active measures against Al Qaeda. In his private and public testimony for the commission, Clarke made much of this plan. But we found that neither President Clinton nor any individual high up in his administration, including Sandy Berger and his deputy James Steinberg, recalled ever having heard of "Plan Delenda." Similarly, we learned that many documents in SOLIC files never reached—or at least made no impression on—secretaries or deputy secretaries or other assistant secretaries of defense or senior military officers. Pentagon witnesses reminded us that they had had a lot of other matters on their minds, including military operations in Bosnia and Kosovo and the reshaping of forces to fit a post–Cold War world.

A telling moment in an interview came in October 2003. Army Major General Russell Honoré, though he had been vice director of operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said he had known almost nothing about Al Qaeda. As the commission report summarizes his testimony, Honoré "commented to us that intelligence and planning documents relating to al Qaeda arrived in a ziplock red package and that many flag and general officers never had the clearances to see its contents."

THE ACTUAL DRAFTING OF THE report was collective. I produced some first-draft material. MacEachin, Snell, Hurley, and members of their teams and other teams also produced first drafts. Each draft went to every staff member with the requisite clearances. The front office produced revised drafts, sometimes as a result of sitting together and looking at text projected on a screen in the conference room. We set an arbitrary word limit and tried hard to enforce it, but the limit had to keep moving upward as members of the staff battled successfully for inclusion of particular pieces of evidence. The device nevertheless helped to make drafters shift into footnotes language that interfered with the narrative flow. Everyone became a storyteller.

The staff statements, read out at the beginning of relevant public hearings, contributed to the development of a common voice. Work on these statements sometimes went on through entire nights. The effect was to produce agreed-upon language, some of which would be borrowed for the final report. The process heightened everyone's sensitivity to terms and meanings. (One endless debate concerned the question of whether "Islamism" and "Islamic extremism" were synonyms.) Since each staff statement had to be cleared for public release, the process also helped measurably to induce the White House, the CIA, and others to allow publication of the final report without prolonged battles over classification issues.

Writing the bulk of the report as straightforward narrative helped the commission achieve its surprising unanimity. The report tells of a plot that developed mostly while Bill Clinton was president. It describes the evolution of American policy under both Clinton and Bush. Hence, any point potentially reflecting unfavorably on one administration could be balanced with a point reflecting unfavorably on the other. In the matter of counterterrorism, there were no heroes in the American government in the years leading up to September 11. It was also possible to strip away interpretive language, even adjectives and adverbs, so as to assure the reader that we were just reciting the historical facts.

COMPOSING A REPORT THAT all commissioners could endorse carried costs. The report has weaknesses; and these weaknesses diminish somewhat the extent to which it fulfills Kean's goal of telling future generations, "This is how it happened."

For one thing, the report skirts the question of whether American policies and actions fed the anger that manifested itself on September 11. I think myself that the report is right in saying that Al Qaeda attacked the United States because of what the nation was rather than because of what it did. Still, the report is weak in laying out evidence for the alternative argument that the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and the Capitol might not have been targeted absent America's identification with Israel, support for regimes such as those in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Pakistan, and insensitivity to Muslims' feelings about

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their holy places. The commissioners believed that American foreign policy was too controversial to be discussed except in recommendations written in the future tense. Here we compromised our commitment to set forth the full story.

Second, the report often pairs contradictory assertions without helping the reader to evaluate them. This was the case, for example, in the report's discussion of U.S. cruise missile strikes on Afghanistan and Sudan in 1998. These were the Clinton administration's response to Al Qaeda's bombing of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The text notes glancingly that the strikes coincided with the worst moments of the Monica Lewinsky scandal and that this contributed to public skepticism—the "Wag the Dog" canard. The report goes on to say that this "likely had a cumulative effect on future decisions about the use of force against Bin Ladin." And it adds immediately: "Berger told us that he did not feel any sense of constraint." Which statement is more believable? The reader has to guess.

Third, and most troubling to me, the report is probably too balanced. Its harshest criticism is directed at institutions and procedures, particularly the CIA, the FBI, and communications links within the counterterrorist community. But many on the staff had worked in these or other national security agencies. They felt loyal to them and some of them expected to return to work there. Collective drafting led to the introduction of passages that offset criticism of an agency with words of praise. Not all these words were deserved.

Individuals, especially the two presidents and their intimate advisers, received even more indulgent treatment. The text does not describe Clinton's crippling handicaps as leader of his own national security community. Extraordinarily quick and intelligent, he, more than almost anyone else, had an imaginative grasp of the threat posed by Al Qaeda. But he had almost no authority enabling him to get his government to address this threat. His Vietnam record and the controversy over gays in the military, among other things, made him an object of scorn in much of the Pentagon. All elements in the CIA felt alienated when he failed to attend the ceremony for two employees shot down outside headquarters by a Pakistani terrorist, sending his wife in his place. And that was only the beginning of a parade of Clinton's offenses against the intelligence community. His relations with the FBI started badly and became worse. He and director Louis Freeh did not speak to each other. Of course, officials in all these agencies would have obeyed the president's orders, but few were prepared to help him figure out what those orders might be. The report veils all this.

Passages in the report dealing with the Bush administration can be read as preoccupied with avoiding even implicit endorsement of Clarke's public charge that the president and his aides "considered terrorism an important issue but not an urgent issue." I think myself that the charge was manifestly true—for both administrations. But the language that shields Bush's advisers may be unfair to the president himself. Deeply buried in a footnote is evidence that Bush called for action against Al Qaeda well before any of his high-level advisers. The footnote cites Clarke as affirming and re-affirming that he heard Bush in March 2001 complain that current policy for coping with terrorism amounted to little more than swatting flies. This was two months before anyone else in his administration exhibited serious concern about shortcomings in American counterterrorist strategy.

THE LAST PHASE OF THE COMmission's formal work was hectic. Some of the commissioners worked over drafts as they emerged from negotiations between teams and the front office. In some instances, we were able to persuade commissioners that the staff-written text was preferable. In most instances, we yielded—more often than not because the commissioners' changes were improvements. Gorton and former Navy Secretary John Lehman on the Republican side and Gorelick and former Nebraska Senator Bob Kerrey among the Democrats were careful writers who improved many passages. Kerrey was principal author of the eloquent preface stressing how the commissioners set an example of working cooperatively.

Kean and Hamilton had accepted Zelikow's suggestion that the commission test the possibility of the report's being brought out by a commercial publisher. The Government Printing Office, the customary publisher of official reports, Zelikow presumed, would produce something hard to get and expensive. Eventually, the commission signed a contract with W. W. Norton, stipulating that the report be put on sale in most bookstores in America on the day of its public release and that the price not exceed ten dollars. Norton agreed that if the book made a substantial profit, at least some of that profit would go to charity. (Neither the government nor the commission could accept royalties.)

A copy editor cleared for access to classified data went to work in the SCIF. Staff technicians set up computers from which page-proof copy could be transmitted directly to the printer. The already crowded SCIF found space for delegations from the CIA, the Pentagon, the FBI, and other agencies combing the text for possible disclosures of classified information. From writing his collaborative book with Rice, Zelikow had learned that except in very rare cases, the identifying data for a classified document was not itself classified. Therefore, for example, the report could cite a Top Secret Codeword memorandum from Clarke to George Tenet so long as the citation said simply "Clarke to Tenet" with enough other identification so that some researcher could find it later in the National Archives. To question the text that made reference to this document, agency reviewers had to make a case that the specific words in the body of the report would, if made public, jeopardize national security or reveal intelligence sources and methods. Negotiations with agency teams caused us occasionally to cloud the narrative so as not to risk identifying a human source or a particular interception capability. In no instance, to my knowledge, did we change an assertion about or a quotation relating to a policy debate within the U.S. government. Where we dug in our heels, we won.

The only point on which I fault Kean, Hamilton, and the other commissioners is their reluctance ever to challenge the CIA's walling off Al Qaeda detainees. The agency gave us all interrogation reports bearing on September 11. It even put to the detainees some questions sent them by commission staff. But the CIA

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refused to permit any direct access either to the detainees or to the interrogators and their interpreters. We never had full confidence in the interrogation reports as historical sources. Often we found more reliable the testimony that had been given in open court by those prosecuted for the East African embassy bombings and other crimes. At the end, the CIA refused permission for the report to name detainees other than those whose apprehension had been officially acknowledged. The report's text and footnotes hide the identity of a score of others whose names had actually appeared in the news media. I think the commission could have successfully challenged the CIA on both access to detainees and release of names, but it chose not to fight these battles.

THE VERY LAST STAGES WERE delicate. Kean and Hamilton wanted to brief the White House and leaders in both houses of Congress, but they did not want to give anyone an advance copy of the report. They were sure it would be leaked. The publisher had to hold up actual printing so that Kean and Hamilton could say truthfully on the day before release that they had not themselves yet seen copies of the final report. And a dreadful moment came on the day before publication. An aide to a powerful member of the House telephoned the commission asking angrily about a rumor that the report would be issued by a private publisher. "It's a report to Congress," the aide thundered. The person on our end of the line remarked that stories about the commission's publication plans had been featured in *The New York Times* weeks earlier. "We don't read the fucking *New York Times*" was the reply. (Fortunately, the individual decided not to pursue the complaint.)

Almost miraculously, Norton managed to print six hundred thousand copies overnight and express them to bookstores across the country so that they could go on sale more or less precisely at noon on July 22, 2004. The copies flew off booksellers' tables. Norton had to print another half-million within a week. Over the next eight months, the Norton edition and versions issued by other publishers sold something like two million copies, and an astounding 6.9 million copies were downloaded from the commission's website.

The reader of a history certainly benefits from knowing the writers' contexts; and this will always be true for the 9/11 Commission Report, which was written in a period of partisanship almost as intense as the 1790s or the 1850s. But the report was dedicated to the idea that a genuine concern for communicating an accurate picture of our reality to future generations may allow us to transcend the passions of the moment. For this reason, I hope that this official report will not be the last government document of its kind. In these perilous times, there will surely be other events that will require the principles of historiography allied to the resources of government, so that urgency will sometimes become the friend of truth. ■

Alan Wolfe

What God Owes Jefferson

GOD'S POLITICS:
WHY THE RIGHT GETS IT WRONG AND THE LEFT DOESN'T GET IT
By Jim Wallis
(HarperSanFrancisco, 384 pp., $24.95)

TAKING FAITH SERIOUSLY
Edited by Mary Jo Bane, Brent Coffin, and Richard Higgins
(Harvard University Press, 381 pp., $29.95)

I.

THE PHENOMENON OF MARtyrdom demonstrates that political success and personal salvation do not generally go together. The faithful find grace not in building winning coalitions, but in worshipping God's glory. Gazing toward heaven means stumbling on earth, a small price to pay for the rewards that await.

For a deeply religious society, the United States has had little or no culture of martyrdom. There are those—bless them—who share the suffering of the downtrodden. But America's voluble religious rightists, those who are most visible in their insistence that they embody the true faith, are too busy celebrating their victories to have much time for defeat. They have rendered under Caesar what is Caesar's: themselves, as it happens, and all the political power that comes with them. They dwell not in the house of the Lord, but in the House of Representatives. Their prayer breakfasts are strategy sessions, their churches are auxiliaries of political parties, their pastors are political bosses. Their God *must* be great: look at the clout of his constituency.

Once confined to the margins of American politics, the religious right seems to be everywhere these days, rallying to the cause of Terri Schiavo or lobbying intently for conservative judges. No wonder that activists on the left of the political spectrum find themselves filled with wonder. Surely, they believe, it ought to be possible to remind Americans that Jesus was a man of compassion who turned swords into plowshares. On theological grounds alone, the left's case to rally God to its side ought to be stronger than the right's. "It's time to take back faith in the public square," writes Jim Wallis, America's leading evangelist for progressive causes. In the presidential campaign last year, Howard Dean asserted that he belonged to the Democratic wing of the Democratic Party. Jim Wallis insists that he belongs to the Christian wing of Christianity.

Wallis is not the only prominent believer with progressive instincts to challenge the religious right's influence in American politics. *Taking Faith Seriously* offers a collection of policy papers written by scholars associated with Harvard's Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations. Arguing that religious organizations are a crucial aspect of America's network of ever-spawning voluntary associations, these writers aim to use the insights of social science to better understand the role that religion plays in American public life. Although Jim Wallis worked with them from time to time, their book is not written in his prophetic yet strangely inside-the-Beltway tone. Still, even if they write with greater analytical precision, there is no masking their larger political point: liberal democracy has a place for religious believers, in no

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small measure because religious believers constitute a pluralistic, diverse, and basically reasonable group of Americans. As sensible as that claim may be to most people, it would be considered hostile and inflammatory to the new breed of Christian Republicans.

Here, then, are two books that together make the best case yet for the notion that the left can no longer allow the right to claim a monopoly on religion's involvement in politics. Yet in making the case so well, they also expose some of its flaws. Of course the left should not let the right monopolize religion. The politicization of the religious right has done great damage to both religion and politics. But everything depends on how religion and politics meet. There are good ways and bad ways to bring them together, and for all the sensible suggestions in these books, neither avoids the bad ways completely. If liberals are to return to power, it must not happen by appropriating some of the rotten ideas of conservatives.

II.

IN KEEPING WITH THEIR LITERALIST disposition, with their theological conviction that the Bible is literally true, right-wing Christians believe that the more conservative the society, the better matters will be for religious conservatives. This is the premise of their politics; but the premise is false. It is, in fact, a spectacular mistake. For conservative religion has always flourished best in liberal societies, and the more liberal, the better.

Of all liberal society's great innovations, none has been more important to the rise of conservative religion than the commitment to free exercise embodied in one of the First Amendment's two clauses. Today's religious conservatives live off the accomplishments of previous generations of religious radicals, whose willingness to challenge received doctrine, to confront established authority, to dispense with encrusted tradition, to develop their own vernacular, and to insist on the dignity of the individual believer pierced the heart of everything conservative around them. Had not a love of liberty accompanied the rise of evangelical religion in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe and North America, there would never have occurred the awakenings that inspire today's religious activists. Free exercise requires a free society. This should have been obvious. It is, indeed, a literal reading of the constitutional language. About the relation of free exercise to a free society, ask only the Jehovah's Witnesses. No other organization has done more to expand the quintessentially liberal idea of allowing dissenting voices to be heard than this decidedly conservative faith.

The First Amendment's other clause—the one separating church and state—is another liberal idea without which conservative religion could not exist. Written just two decades after the publication of *The Wealth of Nations*, the First Amendment essentially created a free market in the salvation of souls. Left without the financial guarantees offered by state monopolies—especially, in the early American Protestant imagination, the decadent and reactionary Catholic Church—congregations would live or die by their own efforts in recruiting members, tithing their purses, and kindling their enthusiasm.

By the time Tocqueville arrived in the 1830s, the pattern had been set. The itinerant preacher, the bewildering variety of new denominations, the determination to evangelize: all took advantage of America's remarkable experiment in church-state separationism to organize on behalf of God. European religion—not only in its Catholic form, but also in its various Calvinist and Episcopal manifestations, burdened by the privileges secured by established churches—withered and, in the opinion of many, died. But American religion, banned from the state, infused the culture. The more it was kept out of politics, the deeper would be its reach into every other area of life.

IF THE CLOSE LINKS BETWEEN established religions and European monarchies spurred the growth of religious liberty in the United States, their hierarchical organization and their affinity with privilege convinced many an American believer of the necessity for equality. There would be a clergy, of course; but it need not be a learned one speaking a language foreign to its flock, nor need it wear the finery associated with decadent aristocracies. Compared with the old regime, liberal societies were leveling societies, and nothing leveled more than a faith that, in insisting on the priesthood of all believers, held everyone to be equal in the eyes of God. It surprises us today that America's most famous symbol of conservative religious reaction, William Jennings Bryan, was also a great advocate for equality. It should not surprise us at all.

America's free air and free soil worked to the benefit of all American religions, but its truly special blessings flowed to conservative Protestantism. Protestantism's greatest source of strength has been its capacity to re-invent itself. As older modes of worship lost their power to attract, new modes rushed in to fill the gap. In the nineteenth century, the urban revival hall and the rural camp meeting drew crowds away from the staid chapels of the more upper-class faiths. In the twenty-first century, the megachurch brings in those more exposed to Oprah than to Amos, as organ music and hymns give way to contemporary Christian rock, and the diet book is studied more carefully than the Bible, and Sunday attire is replaced by aisle-rolling and spirit possession. Listen to the sermons in the sprawling, dynamic, and theologically incoherent world of conservative Protestantism, and you may hear liberalism denounced from the pulpit; but these jeremiads are philosophically and historically blind, since they are oblivious to the fact that without liberalism, there would not exist the vibrant voluntary sector, the responsiveness to popular taste, or even the freedom to attack the Democratic Party that serve as the homily's backdrop.

SOME RELIGIOUS CONSERVATIVES are aware of the debt that they owe to liberal ideas. Among them has been the largest Protestant denomination in America, the Southern Baptist Convention. Baptists cut their teeth on liberal principles. Their most famous leaders across the centuries—Roger Williams (1603–1683), John Leland (1754–1841), George W. Truett (1867–1944)—preached on behalf of religious liberty and church-state separation. True, their commitments were not the same as those of Enlightenment skeptics; Williams sought to protect the garden of faith from the wilderness of government, not the other way around. But their significant presence among American believers helps to explain why we never developed a tradition of clericalism and thus were spared nosy inquisitors relying on the police power of the state to enforce the creedal orthodoxies of one

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particular sect. As odd as it may sound in these days of conservative ecumenicalism, when all that matters on the right is whether your beliefs are conservative and not what your beliefs actually are, Baptists were once closer to Jews in their commitment to religious liberty than they were to establishment-oriented Catholics (against whom, it must also be said, they were once deeply prejudiced).

It is a matter of considerable political importance that so many of today's Baptist leaders have opted to neglect the history and the traditions of their own denomination. Sensing an opportunity to wield considerable political influence, leaders such as Richard Land, president of the SBC's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, Albert Mohler, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Adrian Rogers, of Memphis's Bellevue Baptist Church, developed close connections with the Republican Party, and with the religious right that was fueling its growth. In March 1998, after meeting with the conservative political strategists Paul Weyrich, Gary Bauer, and James Dobson, Land said of his relationship to them: "The go-along, get-along strategy is dead. No more engagement. We want a wedding ring, we want a ceremony, we want a consummation of the marriage."

They got one. Land sometimes criticizes the Republican Party, as he did when it tried to use church mailing lists to bring out voters in 2004, and he goes to great lengths to try to prove that his political activism can be reconciled with the Baptist tradition of religious liberty. (He argues, for example, that the state can "accommodate" religion without violating the First Amendment.) But he is fooling no one, not least other Baptists. "Though not ready to jettison separation," writes the historian Barry Hankins in *Uneasy in Babylon: Southern Baptist Conservatives and American Culture*, "he knows his views on this aspect of church-state relations are different enough from previous considerations that he needs to use a different term, hence his use of 'accommodation' to encapsulate his principles."

Liberals worry that the religious right, by failing to respect the proper boundary between church and state, will move the United States in a theocratic direction insufficiently appreciative of the blessings of human freedom. That may well be true, but among the first to suffer would be religious conservatives. If it could, the religious right would create a society in which Christianity's place of privilege would be supported by special access to public funds, police powers charged with enforcing its conception of morality, restrictions on the free speech of atheists and non-Christians, and a foreign policy designed to spread its word. Yet by sucking up the air of human liberty, such a society would leave a vacuum in which new religious movements—tomorrow's evangelical establishment—would find no place of nourishment.

RELIGIONS THAT DRAW TOO close to politics lose their capacity to innovate. If they receive government money, they become bureaucracies, which is one reason that at least some deeply conservative believers are skeptical of President Bush's talk about faith-based initiatives. If their objective is to get out the vote, they will want an obedient flock, not

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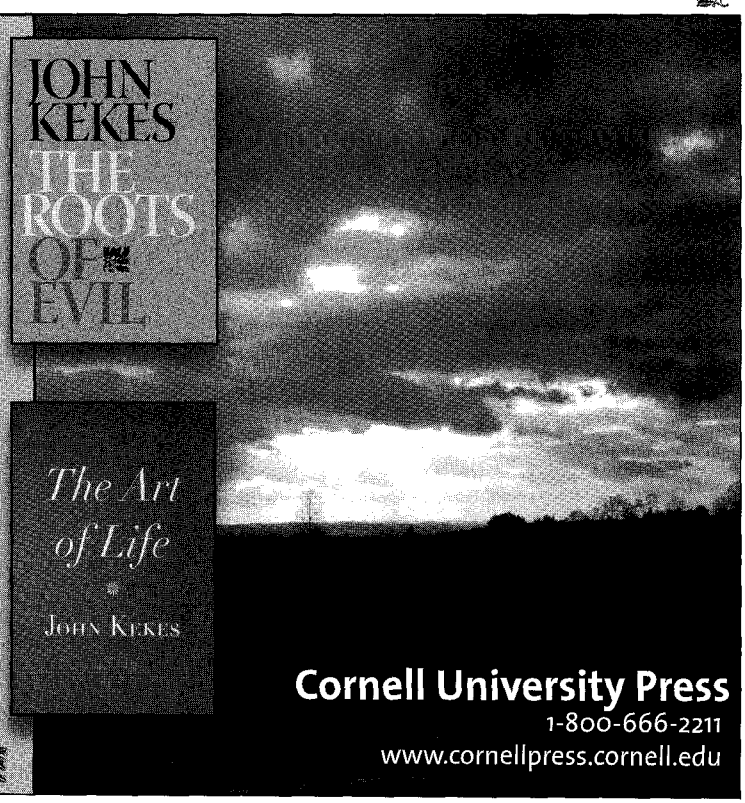

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disputatious otherworldly saints. Their clergy will become more comfortable in the country club than on the street corner; worried about their standing, the status of their capital campaign, and their ties to local business, they will lose their ability to speak to the economically marginalized, from whom conservative religion has always drawn the bulk of its new recruits. (Whatever its commitment to real Darwinism, the Bush administration's unblinking support for social Darwinism ensures that untold numbers of potential conservative Christians will never live to adulthood.) Their churches may grow, to be sure; indeed, they will develop management objectives, best practices, and consumer surveys to ensure their growth. But the resources of the spirit are limited, and the more that goes into committee work, the less there is for God. Evangelicals did well in America not least because they had little or no political power.

The leaders of the religious right have evidently decided that none of this matters to them. After all, how many times in a millennium does one get the opportunity to change the culture? The age of Bush is their opportunity, and they are not going to let it pass by. They may think that religion—the spiritual, otherworldly, transcendental kind—is for idealists, and that politics is too exciting and too profitable for them to stay stringently behind the pulpit. Right there before their very eyes is the prospect of a Supreme Court with an unshakable majority in favor of returning the United States to its Christian roots. God would not want them to take their eyes off the prize, and the least they can do is to work on his behalf.

Yet for all its political muscle, the religious right is an easy roll. Republican leaders are happy to throw symbolic crumbs to them—Terri Schiavo's life, constitutional amendments banning gay marriage that are designed never to pass—and they lick them up gratefully. Of course they may someday get their Supreme Court, and perhaps the struggle will have been worth it; but to this point it seems correct to say that they have sacrificed the future of their faith for pretty thin gruel. Given the degree to which Americans distrust politicians, it boggles the mind that religious leaders would consign themselves to that particular circle of hell. But they have chosen to do so, and they, more than anyone, will reap the whirlwind.

III.

"WE ALL NEED, IN A VERY real and dire sense, to get some old-time Religion! Politics can't save itself. Nor can it rely for its salvation on the debased spirituality so prevalent in the culture." These are the words of the left-wing firebrand Jim Wallis, not the right-wing activists Pat Robertson or James Dobson. *God's Politics* is filled with words such as these. "We've lost the social, unifying, and liberating aspects of biblical faith," Wallis laments. "What is needed is nothing less than a renovation of our souls and the soul of our politics." And lest any reader fail to grasp the point, Wallis leaves no doubt that *his* faith, the evangelical one, is the one that our country needs most. "Without a personal God, there is no personal dimension to belief.... In today's world, there is one overriding and key distinction in all of the religion that is growing—a God who desires relationship with each person." That is Jesus talk, even if Jesus is not mentioned.

Politically speaking, Wallis's book is long overdue. He is correct to point out that the Jesus invoked by so many conservative religious believers has little or no relationship to the Jesus who preached on behalf of the outcasts and was widely admired for his humility. When it comes to interpreting Scripture, at least in its moral and social aspects, Wallis has it all over Robertson and Falwell, and if he had his way, they would go the way of Jimmy Swaggart and Tammy Faye Bakker. But in adopting much of the language of Christian evangelicalism, Wallis brings along its problems. Its participation in politics has led the religious right to a position in which its politics have driven out its faith. *God's Politics* is proposing the same degradation for the left. For the left would certainly suffer a similar fate if it adopted the prophetic stance that Wallis urges.

Religion and politics have such a difficult time mixing because the uncompromising faith required for the one defies the brutal realism of the other. Wallis is in many ways a very worldly man, an active politician; he fills his book with letters and memos that he has written to the leading political figures of our times, and accounts of his meetings with very important people, and glimpses of his life on the road as he speaks across the country on a schedule that only a presidential candidate could love. This Jim Wallis is a policy wonk. He has positions on the war on terrorism, Millennium Development Goals, the future of the Gaza Strip, the global campaign against HIV/AIDS, and the proper role of the IMF and World Bank. His Jesus would need a staff of economists and planners to make his presence felt among us.

IN ANOTHER SENSE, THOUGH, Wallis does not seem to have a political bone in his body. "Many of the president's critics make the mistake of charging that his faith is insincere at best, a hypocrisy at worst, and most a cover for his right-wing agenda," he writes. "I don't doubt that George W. Bush's faith is sincere and deeply held." Well, I do: I can imagine no scenario in which the president dissuades Karl Rove from a political strategy because his religion forbids it. But what if it is? Bush is no victim of "bad theology," as Wallis informs his readers. He is a politician striving to achieve real-world objectives that would have devastating consequences for millions of people; and whatever religion he may have surely is secondary to that. I admire Jim Wallis the man of God for faith in all people, even the lamentable George W. Bush. I do not find Jim Wallis the political analyst particularly trustworthy about the struggle that it will take to stop Bushism and all that it represents.

The best example of Wallis's political myopia is his insistence that he has no political agenda. Religious values, he claims, are inclusive ones, and as a religious leader he does not want anyone to feel left out of the conversation. At various points in his book, Wallis even identifies himself as conservative, especially "on issues of personal responsibility, the sacredness of human life, the reality of evil in our world, and the critical importance of individual character, parenting, and strong 'family values.'" Yet as he goes through his list of what Jesus would do today, there can be no doubting that Wallis's heart leans left. "Of course, God is not a partisan; God is not a Republican or a Democrat," Wallis writes. But people are Republicans or Democrats, and if they were to vote for the agenda in which Wallis believes—a healthier environment, greater equality of incomes, a repudiation of foreign policy unilateralism, gay civil unions—they will be voting Democratic. No Republican activist would take seriously Wallis's claim to be above politics, and with good reason.

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Progressive beliefs are not made less progressive by claiming that they embody what God wants.

To position himself as nonpolitical, Wallis creates a dichotomy between the militant Christian right and those who belong to the ACLU and the Anti-Defamation League. The latter—"secular fundamentalists," Wallis calls them—fail to appreciate religion's role in American history and "attack all political figures who dare to speak from their religious convictions." These people "make a fundamental mistake" by insisting "that the separation of church and state ought to mean the separation of faith from public life." God, in Wallis's account, may be personal, but he is never private. Our public life needs him because otherwise we would have no sense of the common good, no prophetic vision needed to realize it, and no individuals such as Martin Luther King Jr. willing to hold us up to our highest ideals. (Leftists who invoke King on behalf of religious intervention in politics ought at least to remember that King was a close student of Reinhold Niebuhr, who, more than any other American theologian, warned of the dangers of too easy an identification of faith with power.)

One need not agree with the values of the ACLU and the ADL to find Wallis's dichotomy bizarre. Secular liberalism and religious fundamentalism do not have even remotely similar political or psychological dispositions. The former allows room for religion, including religious fundamentalism, if only in the private sphere; but the latter allows no room for liberalism, in the private or the public sphere. Wallis may be on the left, but like his fellow believers on the right, he is not much of a liberal. If there were legions of progressive Christians in the land willing to vote for his prophetic stance—I wish that there were—they would need the same protections of free expression, church-state separationism, and the right to organize that have sustained the religious right.

If God is a source of our common morality, he is not the only source. From him we derive lessons in the meaning of life, but we may do the same from moral philosophers, Founding Fathers, writers and artists, and even an occasional social scientist. We could use some more God talk, I think, in our public life, but we could also use a lot more history and reasoned argument. The advantage of the latter is that those who have used them have rarely tried to exclude anyone else from the conversation. I would not want to live in either a society composed solely of secular liberals or a society composed solely of religious fundamentalists, but at least the former lives and lets live.

"The best response to bad religion is better religion, not secularism," Wallis writes. That may be true of religion in the private sphere, in the soul; but from the standpoint of a pluralistic society, we are better off with bad religion than with theological single-mindedness. Affirmations of "God" or "the creator," platitudinous and "badly" religious as they may be, exclude fewer Americans than pledges to Jesus or the Prophet. "The best religion to counter the Religious Right," Wallis claims, "is prophetic faith—the religion of the prophets and, of course, Jesus." Count me out, because Jesus is not my God. When it comes to politics, Jim Wallis is on the other end of the spectrum from Jerry Falwell. When it comes to Jesus, they stand in the same corner.

IV.

RELIGION NEEDS SECULARISM to thrive. But it is also true that secular society needs religion to grow. This idea, which liberals do not like to hear, is made with exceptional clarity by Peter Dobkin Hall and Ronald F. Thiemann, two of the contributors to *Taking Faith Seriously*. Hall demonstrates how the important and now quite secular idea of moral agency—the belief that we are captains of our own fate—had its origin in the revolt against strict Calvinism led by preachers such as Jonathan Edwards, Timothy Dwight, and Lyman Beecher. The problem is easily stated. If we are all tainted with original sin, our salvation or our damnation is in the hands of a capricious God; we have no autonomy and, without it, our love of God is cheapened. It was a short step, in Hall's account, from this theological point to the development of the American voluntarism so celebrated by Tocqueville.

Searching for a role for human beings to play in the process of their own salvation, Beecher discovered the importance of voluntary associations, and the free air of the West (he moved to Cincinnati in 1832), and the notion of a common good. Although Hall does not say so, it nicely fits his story that Beecher's daughter would play such a vital role in exposing the this-worldly evils of slavery. "The historical record indicates that the proliferation of voluntary associations in nineteenth-century America involved groups whose theological convictions and religious practices led them to see secular civil society as the most promising arena for exercising moral agency," Hall concludes. Without its frequent religious awakenings, America would not have become a great secular nation.

Thiemann's focus is different. He is concerned with somewhat arcane developments within the world of Lutheran social service provision. Yet what he tells us puts to shame any simple notion that the religious and the secular constitute two different worlds. No doubt to the surprise of many a contemporary conservative Christian, Martin Luther did not believe that only Christians could carry out good works, or that doing so would be an essential step in their salvation. Good work, Luther told his flock, is good because it helps people, not because it proves the sincerity of a person's faith. Christians ought to be guided by the ideal of a vocation, but this is not in itself solely a religious duty to be carried out by the faithful for the faithful. Once launched into the world, Lutheran orphanages met the

Mary Magdalene

The door closes behind me. A short hallway
I don't resist, as I did not decline your invitation
an hour ago. It came quite unexpectedly
amid the smoke, the worn-out armchairs,
the endless litanies of gain and loss. It came
with welcome urgency and added to my confusion,
which accompanies me, step by step,
as if it were hard to trust its outstretched arms,
the region of light, the swaying of a silver fir
in the arctic. As if thousands of years must pass before
here, in this very room, simple but far from slight,
it would be possible to believe in you again.

ALEŠ DEBELJAK

—translated from the Slovenian by Andrew Zawacki and the author

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same problems of limited budgets, diverse clienteles, and staff professionalization as any other kind of organization; as Thiemann writes, "their missions became shaped more by the demands of external public demands than by a clearly stated internal theological rationale." The lesson for our times is plain: provide public funds for religiously motivated social services if you wish, but do not expect them to remain "religious" if you do. Religion is an excellent incubator for such secular ideals as the modern welfare state.

To the editors of *Taking Faith Seriously*, the mutual interdependence of the religious and the secular allows us to avoid the extremes of "faith-based boosterism" and "dogmatic secularism." (Yes, it is the same dichotomy perceived by Jim Wallis.) Were they to avoid this coarsening polarization, Americans could find common ground on some of the most contentious issues of the day. One example is offered by the debate over faith-based initiatives, Bush's proposal to allow religious organizations to play a greater role in social service provision. Religious boosters are mistaken, Bane, Coffin, and Higgins point out, when they insist that faith-based initiatives can replace the welfare state, for there are many sources of compassion, not just religious ones. At the same time, secularists are wrong to oppose faith-based initiatives for fear that they will become sectarian, since religious organizations have many purposes, not only salvational ones. Once we "adopt a stance of critical openness toward religion's place in public life," we can recognize that there is a middle ground out there. Secularists ought to extend rights of recognition to believers, and believers ought to understand that liberal pluralism includes a place for them.

Taking Faith Seriously offers a series of case studies designed to demonstrate that the always tricky and sometimes unsolvable puzzles posed by faith in a liberal democracy can best be addressed by appreciating the role that religion actually plays in concrete circumstances. The decision to look at specific cases was a good one; people who believe in different gods, as well as people who believe in none of them, are more likely to find common ground when they know one another personally than when they shout abstractions at one another over the airwaves or disagree with one another through their political leaders. Social science cannot tell us what is morally the right thing to do; but it can tell us what, practically speaking, from the standpoint of a compassionate democratic society, is the smart thing to do.

Some of the case studies are outstanding, such as Bane's analysis of the gap between Catholic teachings on the common good and the often dismally low rates of civil participation among ordinary Catholics, and Omar McRoberts's unflinching portrait of how difficult it can be for inner-city churches to evangelize the culture when the culture around them is crime-ridden and drug-drenched. But alas, the bulk of the material in *Taking Faith Seriously* either repeats research that has already been published or fails to address the issues raised by the editors. And the one contribution that forthrightly takes on the issue of religion in liberal democracy—Coffin's account of the way churches in Lexington, Massachusetts dealt with conflicts over homosexuality—is hardly reassuring.

Coffin's story is organized around a town forum that took place in October 2000 called "Respecting Differences: Creating Safer Schools and a More Inclusive Community for Gay and Lesbian People and Their Families." This was not the kind of title chosen to leave attendees in suspense over the outcome. Every word in the title screams liberalism, and indeed the forum was the brainchild of one of the town's Unitarian Universalist churches, First Parish, surely the most liberal congregation in this very liberal suburb. Still, Helen Cohen, First Parish's minister, believed that the forum could not be taken seriously unless evangelical Christians attended, and so she invited Chris Haydon, pastor of Trinity Covenant Church. Eventually nine religious leaders (as well as Representative Barney Frank) addressed the forum; Haydon was the only evangelical among them. Coffin does not offer many details on what actually took place at the forum, but he does say that "an open, respectful exchange developed" and that the discussion was characterized by "searching questions, personal experiences, moral convictions." The whole experience left Coffin persuaded that churches can play a role in "recognizing religious pluralism, disagreeing without dividing, and articulating democratic values of tolerance and mutual respect."

But a closer look at his case suggests a different conclusion. "While they tend to be affluent," Coffin writes, "Lexington's congregations mirror broader trends." This is simply not true. Lexington is not affluent, it is rich; its median housing price approaches seven figures. It is also a disproportionately academic town, its culture shaped by the fact that Massachusetts Avenue, which runs through Harvard, continues directly to Lexington, eight miles away. And its congregations do not mirror national trends at all. The fact that two rabbis and five mainline Protestant ministers addressed the October forum, with only one priest and one evangelical pastor, suggests just how far away Lexington stands from the increasingly megachurch-inspired American religious landscape. There may be an argument available to Coffin to suggest why his hometown offers an appropriate case study, but his failure to provide one—along with the fact that three of the four congregationally based case studies in *Taking Faith Seriously* use Boston as their focus—makes the reader worry about the generalizability of his findings.

Even more importantly, Coffin's own findings are not what he claims. Haydon, while an evangelical, is about as far from what is typical in American evangelicalism as it is possible to get. He is part of something called the Evangelical Covenant Church. Quoting from the denomination's description of itself, Coffin describes the ECC as having "roots in historic Christianity as it emerged in the Protestant Reformation, in the biblical instruction of the Lutheran Church of Sweden, and in the great spiritual awakenings of the nineteenth century." You would be surprised to discover, if you relied only on that description, that to Jim Wallis the ECC is "the most interesting church in America today," the very model of what a progressive evangelicalism would resemble. From Wallis we learn that this originally Swedish-inspired denomination is poised to grow among African Americans, and that "all the denomination's pastors now make a pilgrimage to many of the historic sites of the civil rights movement and to forgotten places of extreme hunger still present in America today." So you could not find an evangelical church in the United States more sympathetic to find common cause with Unitarians than this one. "Out of the Covenant's emerging multicultural identity is coming a powerful

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and prophetic commitment to social justice and peace," Wallis writes, playing music to a liberal's ear.

And astonishingly enough, even Lexington's Trinity Covenant Church was too conservative to find much common ground with the town's omnipresent liberals. Trinity did have an internal conflict over family values, but it had nothing to do with gay and lesbian inclusion, because, as Coffin writes, "Trinity's evangelical culture did not allow the matter of sexuality to be debated in terms of gay and lesbian inclusion." What divided Trinity Covenant Church was the question of whether the church could accept a couple who had children but were not married. (The congregation eventually refused to do so.)

On matters involving homosexuality across denominational lines, moreover, no agreements were reached in Lexington, because no discussions actually took place. The book's three editors, including Coffin, praise the fact that "liberal and conservative churches in Lexington were able to structure a civilized dialogue on an important public issue, the inclusion of gays and lesbians in the community." In reality, however, Reverend Craydon, on his way to speak at the forum, had to walk past protesters holding signs saying "What Next?: Pedophiles in Our Schools?" and "Do Not Turn Your Back on God," and inside he heard Barney Frank speak in what Coffin describes as "adversarial, take-no-prisoners rhetoric," which "seemed to mirror the polemics outside." And even more damning to the cause of cross-denominational civility, it turns out that there were two forums on homosexuality in Lexington, not one. Five months after the October event, the town's conservative believers organized one of their own called "Respecting Differences, Part II: A Revolutionary Response to Kinsey-Based Sex Education and Culture." Two people spoke at that meeting, both of them African American. Not a single leader of any of Lexington's liberal congregations bothered to show up.

Social science is an unpredictable horse to ride; once you mount, you have to go where it takes you. Coffin may think that his "thick description" leads to a way to bring religion and politics closer together, but as I read his tale, there exist warnings aplenty to keep them apart. Unlike Lyman Beecher and other nineteenth-century clergymen, today's religious conservatives, even the prophetic sort so much admired by Jim Wallis, are not quite ready to participate in American civic life if doing so means losing their status as a self-enclosed community unwilling to have its values challenged by the larger culture. More remarkably, even Beecher's direct descendants, today's mainline religious liberals, are more comfortable hanging out with people like themselves than treating the views of evangelicals as worthy of debate. If there is dogmatism in this tale, it comes not from the secularists, but from the Unitarians. (For a Christian rightist, of course, they are the same thing.)

In America's past, religion helped to create a society committed to secular liberalism, which in turned helped to spur the growth of religion. Today, if Lexington is any indication, conservative believers want nothing to do with secularism, and liberal religion's advocates are not especially liberal. Both need considerably more training in the need—no, the duty—to live together with people whose views are different from their own before politics and religion can help each other out.

V.

In the wake of John Kerry's defeat, Democrats have been pondering the question of whether they should engage in more God talk. Jim Wallis's book has become Exhibit A for the case that they should do so. And while the editors and the contributors to *Taking Faith Seriously* are not political activists, their message is one that clearly urges greater openness to religion on the part of liberal elites.

I agree with both books: there is no reason, save that of political martyrdom, for the Democratic Party to turn its back on people who not only believe in God but also look to him for guidance about the nature of the good society. Americans want leaders to protect them against foreign threats and to improve the economy, but they also want people who stand for values, and any party that does not respond to the latter as well as the former will be in the minority. But if Democrats seem unwilling to address questions of religious morality, it may not be a fear of faith that inhibits them but a fear of big ideas, even secular ones. They shy away from identifying with liberal and Enlightenment philosophy just as they do from Christian or any other kind of theology. Twenty million Christians have purchased a book that tells them—wrongly, in my view—that they need Christ to lead purpose-driven lives. But liberals rarely speak of purpose at all.

Moral agency, human dignity, freedom of thought and expression, respect for other ways of life, the right to organize: these are moral values, every one of them, and they have all emerged out of the combination of secularly liberal principle and evangelically inspired faith that have mixed together so well throughout American history. That they have stopped mixing in contemporary America is no reason to ignore them. Quite the contrary. The United States now more than ever needs constant reminders of the benefits that liberalism offers to faith—not just, or even especially, to liberal faith. If religious rightists are unwilling to make the case for liberty that enabled Baptist and other conservative churches to grow, let the case be picked up by liberal secularists who, in defending the rights of non-believers, will also protect those who worship in their own way. Our conservative president speaks of the need to protect and to expand freedom, including religious freedom, abroad. It is time for the liberal opposition to make an equally strong case for the same objectives at home. ■

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BERLIN DIARIST

War Stories

IT'S MAY 8, THE SIXTIETH ANNIversary of V-E Day, and I'm standing in Berlin amid 1,000 neo-Nazis, gathered behind a small army of riot police to protest the end of World War II. Of course, any overt expression of Nazism is banned over here (the most common neo-Nazi accoutrement today is medical tape covering various tattoos and T-shirt slogans), and the sponsor of the rally—the extremist Nationalistische Partei Deutschlands (NPD)—disavows any direct connection to the Third Reich. But practically everyone sports a shaved head, and even those who don't, such as a group of buttoned-down, middle-aged Germans I spoke to at length, are working off the Joseph Goebbels playbook. "We have the natural right to our land and to express our Volk's culture," asserts one matronly woman in a long skirt and support hose who refused to give me her name for fear of the "Bolshevik-run state that suppresses our right to speak."

ABOUT A MILE AWAY, I RUN INTO ONE of many anti-Nazi protests, this one a gathering of communists near Bertolt Brecht's Volkstheater. There are many more people here than at the NPD rally, though they seem split by ideological differences fit for a Monty Python sketch: Banners fly for both the Marxist-Leninist Party of Germany and the Marxist-Leninist-Communist Party. I ask one member of the Socialist Workers' Party whether he was worried about the NPD, which last fall won almost 10 percent in the Saxony state elections. "Yes," he says. "The failures of the former working-class parties like the [Social Democrats] and the [Party for Democratic Socialism] have created a vacuum." It's tempting to think that, even if the commies are extreme, they're better than their Nazi opponents—until you remember that the Weimar Republic fell not so much because of the power of the Nazis but because of the weakness of the political center.

THESE DAYS, ONE CAN BE FORGIVEN for drawing parallels to the Germany of the early 1930s—the far right's ascendance, the high unemployment (hovering above 10 percent, reaching 25 percent in some areas), the anti-capitalist rhetoric spouted not just by the extremists but even the Social Democrat leadership. Meanwhile, in recent years, the culture has seen a resurgent interest in Nazi-era novels, documentaries, histories, and films—something unthinkable even a decade ago. "A blockade of silence which paralyzed German families," writes journalist Jürgen Leinemann in a V-E Day edition of *Der Spiegel*, "appears to have been breached." And, unlike previous discussions, today the Germans are asking to what extent they, too, were victims—not just victims of Hitler, but victims of the Allies as well. It's a sentiment the far right is happy to exploit. "The German people were also victims in World War II," says another NPD rally attendee, who likewise refused to give his name. "The Allies did not follow the laws of war." Dozens of posters around the rally grounds show a German city in flames, underneath which reads WIR FEIERN NICHT—we don't celebrate. A few months ago, the Saxony NPD delegation declared the Allies' 1945 attack on Dresden a "holocaust of bombs."

BUT IT'S NOT JUST THE NPD TALKING about World War II, and that's a good thing. The more people debate the war's impact on Germany, the less claim the far right has to the mantle of German victimhood. And, while such talk can be dangerous in anyone's hands, it is reassuring to see intellectuals and the press quickly moving the discussion from the scope of suffering to its context. A full-page article in Saturday's *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, for example, examined U.S. strategic bombing over Japan, noting that the area destroyed in just three Japanese cities—Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagoya—exceeded the total urban area destroyed in all of Germany. The message is that war is hell, and the suffering of the Germans, while real, was not unique. What remains, it implies, is the singularity of the Holocaust.

SUCH MORAL CONTEXTUALIZATION CAN also be seen in the recent German film *Downfall*. A masterful portrayal of the last days in Hitler's bunker, it has been criticized for its three sympathetic characters: Hitler's secretary, a boy press-ganged into defending Berlin, and an S.S. doctor who stands aghast at the army's murder of German citizens. It seems to me, however, that the characters are not positive elements but negative ones. Yes, there are sympathetic characters in the film, just as there were good and bad Germans during the war. But what does it mean when, out of the dozens of people in the bunker that May, only a handful had any claim to decency? What does it mean when a few German civilians acted rightly, while the vast majority stood silent? It is not enough, the film says, to see good among evil. Their relationship must be scrutinized—and, in the case of Nazi Germany, the good failed.

BUT THINGS HAVE CHANGED, AND THE Germans learned. As Albert Camus recognized, the "plague bacillus" of extremist hatred is always present; the mark of a healthy society is how readily it responds when the disease surfaces—and the response in Germany has been remarkable. Hundreds turned out against the NPD after the Saxony elections. Thousands more turned out today. Two days from now, the Holocaust memorial—a field of 2,711 concrete blocks—will open, the first such memorial in Germany and yet another sign that Germany is coming to grips with its past without trying to ignore it.

TONIGHT, BEFORE I SAT DOWN TO write, I left my hotel and crossed Pariser Platz—home of the Brandenburg Gate—for a cup of coffee. The sun had just set, and the square was empty. On the other side of the gate, built to celebrate Germany's military exploits, a massive white tent throbbed to the beat of a reggae concert. Cheers went up as the song ended. Perhaps a concert is not the best way to mark the end of a brutal war, but there was much to celebrate. The NPD, which had intended to march, decided to stay put because it was so heavily outnumbered. The significant violence that many expected never materialized. Germany today is a messy place. But the center still holds. **CLAY RISEN**

Clay Risen visited Germany through the generosity of the Atlantik-Brücke.

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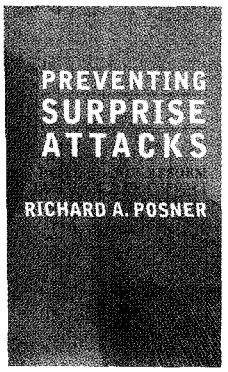

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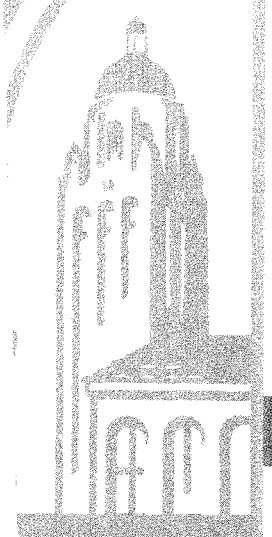

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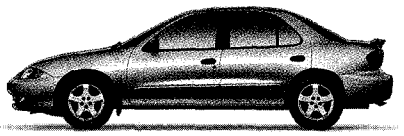

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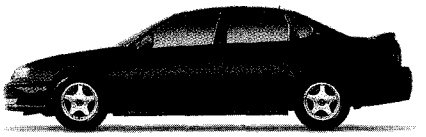

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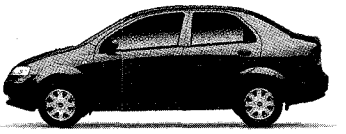

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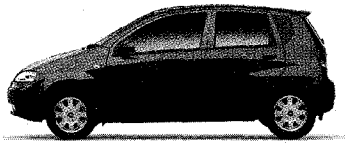

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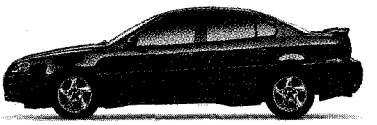

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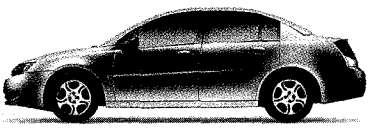

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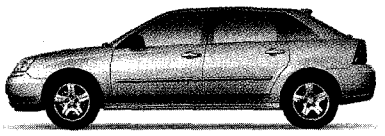

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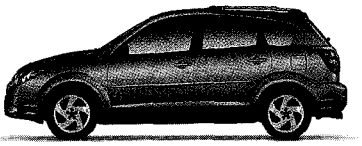

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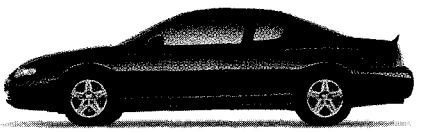

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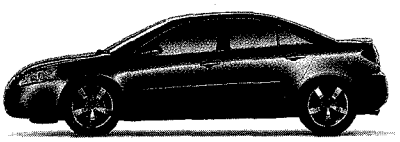

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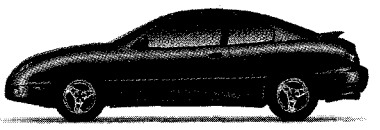

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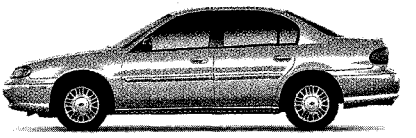

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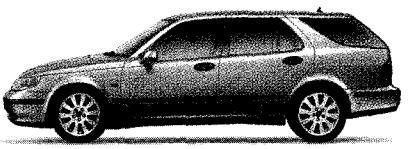
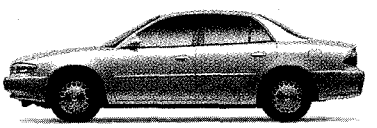
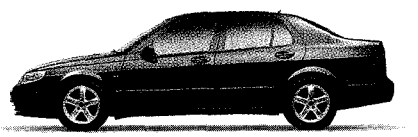


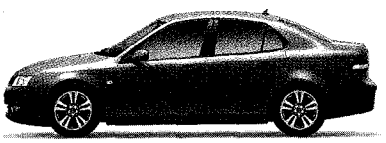
Saab 9-5 Wagon: EPA est. 30 mpg hwy



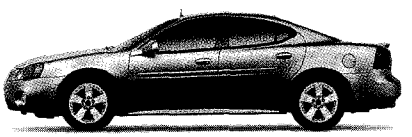
Buick Century: EPA est. 30 mpg hwy



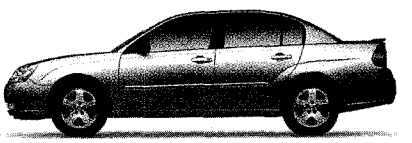
Saab 9-5: EPA est. 30 mpg hwy



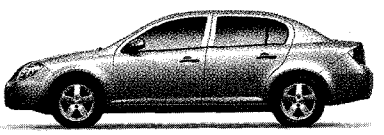
Saab 9-3: EPA est. 31 mpg hwy



Pontiac Grand Prix: EPA est. 30 mpg hwy



Chevrolet Malibu: EPA est. 32 mpg hwy



Chevrolet Cobalt: EPA est. 32 mpg hwy

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